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The Singing Heart



By Florence Ward

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THE SINGING HEART

THE SINGING HEART

BY
FLORENCE WARD

Author of "Phyllis Anne"

NEW YORK
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KE 4013



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THE SINGING HEART

The Singing Heart

CHAPTER I

THE Macallisters were coming home, and they were going to stay all summer. The news emanated from the little stone station one morning in early June—Asa Jennison, waiting outside for some express coming on the seven-one, heard through the open window the telegraph operator laboriously reading a night letter into the telephone—and thereafter percolated so rapidly through the village that within an hour all Fairfield was rippling with excitement.

It was an excitement occasioned not at all because the Macallisters were confirmed exiles. Individually, they visited Fairfield with becoming frequency. Don and his wife, who lived no farther away than Chicago, even belonged to the golf club and went about on their week-end visits with the air of inhabitants who were detained by unpleasant circumstances in an inconsiderable city near at hand. Mildred and her husband had come on from the East every Christmas since their marriage, five years before, scrupulously dividing their visit between the Lodge out on the south road, and the huge house on Millionaire Row, where Madam Pennell lived in an ostentatious seclusion. Alicia was at home

for exactly a month every summer. Fairfield was the only place on the continent where she could relax under protection; and life was sufficiently complicated for Alicia so that she felt relaxation was as necessary as prayer. Driving past on the Highway, one caught a glimpse of her charming, tawny head rising above the chaise-longue which she bought for her own porch use. But that, usually, was all that was to be seen. Intrusion beyond the Macallister's garden wall resulted in a semi-apologetic interview with Janey, who explained that Alicia was not quite up to seeing company. Fairfield resented this indifference ardently and would excuse it with smiling superiority to those outsiders up on Millionaire Row who found the aloofness of the famous Miss Macallister somewhat irritating. A magazine article which mentioned Fairfield as Alicia's birthplace on the same page that it panegyricized her gift of painting, yellowed among the secret treasures of many a house along the Highway. Her unseen presence at the Lodge brought to the inland village something of the enticing tang of Broadway and Fifth Avenue.

When Hugh came, as he did every year or so to pick up whatever things he needed for another trip, Fairfield was swept as by ocean winds. Of all the Macallisters he was easily the favorite, even with his youngest brother, Bobs. Millionaire Row entertained him royally at long, course dinners, meeting him on the familiar level of those who, in their own time, have gone down to the sea in ships. Old neighbors brought him in to their informal supper tables and talked to him about places which they were forced to look up

surreptitiously in Cram's "Atlas" after he had gone. In the mind of Fairfield, Romance walked with Hugh as a familiar spirit. He had chosen deliberately, impulsively, as his mother would have chosen before him, for he was coming home from the small down-state college where Fairfield sent their youngsters, to start, conventionally, on the lowest rung of the ladder in his uncle's windmill factory at home. His mother, going into town to meet him—Dale was the sort who could not wait at the doorstep to welcome her children home—ran across Terhune, who was spending a vivid lifetime hunting the rare and precious in the unlikely corners of the earth, and introduced her son to him between her first kiss and her second irrepressible one; introduced him with the proud nonchalance that a woman wears when she exhibits her firstborn to the man who loved her further back than a son's memory can go. Terhune, seeing the same eyes in each of them, asked the boy an interested question or two courteously, heard of the windmill factory and yawned.

"Seems a pity," he said, "when there's a whole world to cover. I'm sailing for Spain t'night, myself. Going on around. Whyn't you come along?"

It had needed only that. Hugh had never entered Fairfield. Dale telephoned out and the rest of the Macallisters with Marcia Powell, who had risen at five that morning to be ready when Hugh came, took the first train for the city. They spent a few mad hours buying the supplies Terhune suggested, had a gay dinner at Judge Macallister's club, and waved Hugh off on the night limited for New York. Fairfield, excited, was not surprised. The only wonder

was that Dale herself, the unsubdued mother of six, had not clamored to take the jaunt.

Hugh had come back two years later, briefly, being on his way to China after peachblow. It was understood generally that he had asked Marcia Powell to go with him, honeymooning through the South Seas on the way home, but Madam Powell, who governed her household with a weak heart, had cried out against the madness of it until she brought on one of her attacks. So Hugh set out alone, and when he came again it was to find a wheeled chair holding Marcia prisoner. There had been reckless speeding—Marcia was the sort who loved driving very fast—too wide a sweep, perhaps, at a sharp turn of the river road; or, perhaps, something gave way. Nobody knew exactly. The man who was driving had been killed instantly when the machine turned turtle at the top of a sheer drop; but Marcia—lucky—had been alive and quite aware of what had happened. She had not written, of course. Why should she? Things like that sounded so baldly unpleasant put down on a clean sheet of paper. It was only a matter of waiting a little. She would be waiting and quite well by the time Hugh came back again. Part of it was true. She had been waiting, time after time, when Hugh came back. And Hugh never stayed away as long as he would have stayed had she not been there.

Yet he went far. There grew in him the spirit of those adventurers who have scoured the earth no more for gain than for gain's hazard. He knew the ancient towns of Bagdad, Damascus, Trebizond, Stamboul, as easily as he knew Paris or London; he knew the moun-

tains of Yesso and the strange, lush valleys that lead inward from the Ivory Coast; more than that, he knew men the world over, claiming friends by the thousands; soldiers, seamen, archæologists, hunters of big game, diplomats, exiles, drifting through the hidden corners away from civilization, explorers, antiquaries, artists, writers. He brought back many things that never went on sale, now from Russia, now from Java or Borneo. The Lodge on the Highway and Marcia's sunny little sitting-room grew lovely with them.

Considering the distances to which they went, Fairfield kept closely in touch with the Macallisters. But that would be characteristic of Fairfield. An "aristocratic old town" they call it up and down the river valley, ignoring the certain fact that less than a century ago there was only a strip of woodland following the water, through the midst of a waving prairie; and harping somewhat on the knowledge that Fairfield already had a flavor before Chicago was anything more than a bog on the shore of an inland sea.

It lies hidden under elms and maples, their green pierced here and there by a gray spire, at the bend of a little river that dimples under its Stone Arch Bridge and marks a sentient barrier between the cluster of houses on its sloping banks. To the east are flimsy, drab-colored structures, crowded on narrow lots behind dejected shade-trees, one to each narrow strip of turf. They house a motley settlement, Irish, French, German, Swedish, commemorating the immigrations that successively have drifted through the factories of the valley; a settlement that while bitter in remembrance of ancient feuds, is wholly united against the

flood of squat, heavy-jowled "dagoes," Italians, Lithuanians, Poles, Greeks, Russians, Serbians, who swarm in the barrack-like boarding-houses at the edge of the town.

To the northwest runs Millionaire Row, that overflow of the city which, within the last decade, has swept like a Nemesis down upon the river valley, felling the finest apple orchard in the district for its golf course, building great houses along the Highway, dashing through the town in wonderful limousines and filling their days with play for seven out of seven. Fairfield, jogging about a humdrum business six days a week and resting piously on the Sabbath, looked upon these wealthy newcomers with an envy that still had its tinge of Puritanic disapproval and scorn of pleasure.

For in Fairfield, south of the Square, there have survived traditions of New England, traceable even after fifty mellow years of prosperity. It is as if they had torn away the harsh haircloth from their mahogany heirlooms and, keeping the substantial understructure intact, had made them beautiful with soft-colored tapestries. A few of the houses are old, built of the stone quarried along the river, with walnut beams and great fireplaces and wide, shallow stairs. More are the pretentious, gingerbread monstrosities of the late 'Seventies, with cupola and turret and mansard roof; and some are new copies of those Colonial and Dutch farmhouses that follow American trails and gather from wide yards and shady avenues the comfortable flavor of age. "An aristocratic old town" it is, standing distinct among the upspringing of crass, mushroom suburbs, aloof and complacent, a trifle re-

luctant toward the stranger within its gates, but forever tenderly tenacious of its own.

The Macallisters were its own. Their gray stone Lodge, reared on the prettiest stretch of river bottom, a mile beyond the south edge of the Square, had sent two generations to the Legislature, to the circuit court, to other handsome houses up and down the river. It was a roomy and simple house with soft lines, irregular floor levels and quaint fanlights above its wide doors and diamond latticed windows; a house that could not be detached from its people, veiling the rich life that went on within its walls, responding to it as the years went by.

Judge Macallister stayed there contentedly, even after his children had broken bonds and gone away. He was close to seventy, a tall man, dry and withered and fine, with a trim, pointed beard and hair that had once been tawny and was now approaching sheer whiteness. He berated the leisurely town continually, mocking at its small meannesses and personalities, scolding at its crudities and inefficiency, yet loving it with a deep, whimsical affection. He delighted in the property he owned there: the Lodge, the largest brick building, the cottage or two that he rented. He had known how to sit still for forty years and let his affairs prosper without his interference. As the country town took on the air of a semi-suburb, he had waited, accepting whatever good the change had brought. He had the gift of buying well. The corners that he owned sold for larger figures than those of Whithy's, when the time for sale arrived; his lots at the north end went for fancy prices to city people; the stock

in the branch Third Rail that followed the valley was the only stock in a complicated system that paid dividends regularly. He had never been dealt the blows that fall to those who are servile before Mammon. He lived in a kindly neighborliness, reflecting the glory of his children.

To Fairfield, therefore, the coming of the Macallister brood was an event as important as the laying of the concrete which the summer before had transformed the county road into a transcontinental Highway and put Fairfield on every automobile map in the country. The only thing that the incorporate city resented was that the news had been so long delayed. Mrs. Whitby conveyed as much reproachfully to Janey Macallister, stopping her for that purpose as she walked in to school.

There was no possible way by which the average housekeeper along the Highway could tell when Janey Macallister would be going by to school. If she were expecting a packet of books on the seven-one, it would be early enough so that she could receive them with her own hands. If Bobs' trousers showed unusual ravages of the day before, it might be close upon nine o'clock, and she would skim smilingly past the groups of boys and girls who loitered at the corners, and arrive at the head of the stairway just in time to perform a perfunctory hall-duty as they tramped by. There was no regularity whatever about Janey. Nobody tied hair-ribbons or set bread by her passing. But Mrs. Whitby was different. Whenever it was that Janey passed the ugly stone lions guarding the Larkin's

driveway, Mrs. Whitby would rise up from behind the bridal wreath that edged her low porch and arrive at her front gate just in time to intercept and walk with her. It was her matutinal habit to intercept and accompany the passers-by. She had grown skillful in the quarter of a century that she had practiced it. Her husband asseverated that she would leave her breakfast to join Emily Van Sicklen, who was a stenographer in Town and never quite sure of making the seven-twelve, and walk with her until they met the milkman, who would bring Mrs. Whitby back to her own gate just in time to greet Starr Larkin on his way to the seven-forty-eight, and his commutation rubber of whist. Johnson's wagon left the grocery for its first delivery as the train pulled out and Mrs. Whitby would ride comfortably back again. Afterwards there was Wakefield, the cashier at the First National, and Janey on her way to school, and the Judge himself, walking to his office in the Macallister block. And after the Judge the housewives of the Highway, their market baskets on their arms, in a straggling procession past Mrs. Whitby's bridal wreath; a procession lasting so far into the forenoon that its later comers mingled, in time, with the van of early diners returning from the morning's business; and all—so Mr. Whitby said—before his wife had found a moment to clear the breakfast table.

This morning, the burden of news upon her, she was at her gate a full half minute before Janey, and stood nodding excitedly, three fat curls bobbing against the nape of her soft, creased neck.

"And is it true, Janey, about Hugh and the rest? I sh'd think you might've told me. Fairfield's fairly ringing—"

"Fairfield ringing so soon?"

"Asa Jennison told B. T. Said he heard young Ekstrom phoning up to your place. Said they was two for you folks and one from Hugh for Marcy Powell. B. T. called right up for me to tell you if there was anything we could do—and I had to say you'd never dropped a word, as I might've expected, Janey, being the friend I was to your own mother—and find out if there was any truth to it. And Mis' Wakefield called up five minutes after—"

"She's on our line," Janey interpolated with an aridity that escaped Mrs. Whitby.

"—but Starr hadn't heard; nor the maid up to Pennell's—"

"Did you call up there, Mrs. Whitby? Oh—did you do that?"

The older woman's eyes narrowed in close scrutiny of Janey's troubled face. She bent closer, her arms folded across a capacious bosom.

"Is there any reason, particularly why I shouldn't, Janey? It seems like Mildred's mother-in-law'd be likely enough to know something—especially if her own son's comin' with the rest." There was a perceptible pause which Janey made no move to break. "Of course, if what I've heard's true—"

A deep wave of crimson dyed Janey's cheeks, but she smiled merely.

"I said, right from the first, Drury Pennell was no man for a Macallister. These only sons—with money

—and there was always talk enough. It's too bad, now. I could tell two years ago things wasn't right. Mildred saying those clever little slaps at marriage and the like. Will there be a divorce, think, Janey?"

"I don't know a thing about it, Mrs. Whitby." The answer came with a firmness that sat oddly on the girl's soft lips. "Dred—Dru isn't coming *right* away—"

"I heard she give up her house this winter—and took a flat to herself. I heard there was—real trouble. Her maid—Mis' Pennell's, I mean—said they was civil but sarcastic, 'n' neither of 'em sayin' a word. I heard—"

"You better ask Dred herself," Janey broke in. "She'll be here Thursday."

"H'm. Well, it's none too soon if they're to get the good of the summer. I says to B. T., 'The old Nile can't beat the Mississippi Valley for heat, summers the spell is on. Lemme see. They ain't all been home together since your mother died, have they?'"

"No." Janey's lips tightened as they always did when that summer was mentioned. She began to walk a little faster.

"Six years," Mrs. Whitby said thoughtfully. "It's like I say to B. T. Time flies. My, but time flies, I say. Seems like yesterday you were all traipsing past the gate, swinging your book straps." She stared at Janey, walking beside her, slim, bareheaded, the sunlight picking out a bronzy thread here and there in her dark hair, the dull blue of the sweater into whose pockets her hands were plunged deepening a trifle the color of her eyes. On Mrs. Whitby, Janey's appearance, as it often did, produced an effect of irrita-

tion. Her hair, soft and thick, was drawn back from her forehead and arranged in a severe twist at the crown of her head. She wore a heavy and unbecomingly tailored waist and a dun-colored wool skirt that dipped a little unevenly above her stout boots. Her shoulders drooped unconsciously and the skin across her temples had a drawn and waxy look.

"My," Mrs. Whitby said brusquely, "you're lookin' awful old, lately, Janey. I remember thinking last year you looked a sight older than 'Licia, and she's—lemme see—she's—"

"Thirty-three."

"All of that. Nearer thirty-four, her birthday being in August. But a mighty handsome woman, to my way of thinking. Got your father's hair and eyes. All the Macallisters got that goldy-brown look with life in the skin and hair of them. You now—you favor your mother's side. Only *she* had color. Seems like you oughta spruce up some, Janey. You oughta get a—get a pink dress, say; that'd put a little glow in your cheeks, like. You cert'ly need it; and your mother wore pink lovely to the day she died." She caught her breath before Janey spoke, and went on. "There'll be *life* out to the Lodge this summer if I know that handful of children. Never was a quiet moment—and I *hope* you ain't plannin' to sit in a corner to watch the parade go by. You ain't getting any younger, as the saying is; and there's no reason why you should do without when the rest's used to the best the world's got, just because you're the little plain one that stays to home. Maybe you'd rather I didn't put it in words like this, Janey; but you know well

enough I speak right out what I think when some others'd think more and say less, by considerable. You won't look near so wilted, in pink, 'longside of Mildred."

Janey nodded over her shoulder, having gained several yards by the time Mrs. Whitby had finished her admonitions. Yet she smarted under them, as if the woman's finger had pressed, unerring and deep, into the sore bruise left by her own misgivings.

"I suppose I'm silly, God," she explained in a doubtful, hidden fashion after a moment. "But you know how they are. Sure and—suave—and a long way off. It's as if we were always talking about the *weather*. It isn't as if Moth' were there. And I think a pink dress might— If it would keep me from being spinsterish and horrid. That's all."

Janey's thoughts, as often happens when a woman is much alone, were apt to take the form of supplication—little prayers she put up almost unconsciously, that to the strictly orthodox might have seemed a trifle blasphemous since they were chatty rather than devout. But they were very comforting to Janey. They brought her nearer Something that was tender and staunch. They drifted through her thoughts, mingling with the vagrant bits of old songs and poems that were always in her memory, building with them a solitary little philosophy. Janey almost framed her thoughts from the poems, so steeped was she in the poetry her mother loved.

She was so busy that she hardly knew it, but, in a quiet fashion, she was very lonely; had been ever since the Macallisters had drifted away to mingle with a gay, hopelessly grown-up world and take its homage

for their successes. Janey had none of that—neither success nor homage. Between her and the Macallisters there was a barrier of shyness and tolerant impersonality that was like a high wall. She longed wistfully for the old intimacy that they had shared in Mother Macallister's garden. It was a wish unvoiced but springing from the deepest of desires: the unsatisfied, eternal yearning for the mother who was still as real in Janey's life as the splendid sunshine she had loved. She treasured every glint of memory, ever recollection of that gay, dear presence in the house, still radiant, still vivid. She was never without it, and she had never gone away as the others had, to understand how dim memory, unprodded, may become. She was a wonderfully young person in point of moods.

At the crest of the hill where the village library faces the High School, she met Marcia Powell, being pushed up the hill by her small niece. She was a slim woman, older than Janey, with dark hair, and eyes that looked out smilingly, taking fear and dread not quite seriously and making much of laughter; with throat and skin that had a lustrous pallor, as if an abiding spiritual happiness glowed beneath.

"Marcia," Janey called impulsively and dodged across the street toward her, "did you know they were coming—all of them?"

"I've just been down wiring Hugh—"

"How I'm going to pull through all the things that are to do between now and Thursday," Janey sighed frankly. "I didn't expect a soul till the twentieth, and then in relays. And this morning Hugh wired that he was in San Francisco; and 'Licia that she'd just

finished an exhibit and was dead. So—every one arrives. It's a real Macallister trick—getting everything put through ahead of time; changing things around. Myself, I've made a vow never to do that. It's upsetting to Christian fortitude."

"You'll get through, honey. Can I hem things—those cretonnes 'Licia sent?"

"If you'd give the Freshmen their Latin exam to-morrow," Janey said. "Wait, there's Stephen."

She beckoned violently, and Stephen Mayo crossed the street with his sister, who was coming to open the library at nine. Anne's brown hair flowed back from her forehead like liquid. Her mouth was rather large, with two rows of white and perfect teeth. Her hands, plump in harmony with her figure, were beautifully kept. She adored Stephen. It showed in every glance she gave him and sounded in every intonation of her voice. She accepted Janey's friendliness palpably, because Stephen found her worth while and was with Marcia Powell, her most intimate friend. Janey finished the matter of cretonnes while they waited for the Mayos to join them.

"Wistaria, they are, and they fight with everything we have. The room had to be done over—lovely of your mother giving up the paperer— And we've cut up the north bedroom into a bath and shower for the boys—I simply sat at the telephone from seven o'clock on, threatening everybody with the whole Circuit Court if things weren't done. I've made myself unpopular all through Fairfield this morning. I'm asking Marcia to give the finals for me to-morrow, Stephen. I want to go to Town."

"Town?"

"Heresy, I know—examination week. But—"

"Oh, examinations. I know you'd never go if it wasn't necessary—"

The school bell clanged from the steps and they moved automatically toward the corner. At the door, Janey turned and glinted at her superior. For a moment she looked almost pretty.

"But that's the point, Stephen. It really isn't necessary at all. I'm going in—decided all in a breath—for a pink dress—a gay dress, m'lud, and pink as peaches. And—you'll not breathe it—a stuffed dog. Anybody ought to have each of those sometime during life. And my time's come right now."

Afterwards, through all the things that went awry during that week of waiting for the Macallisters, the pink gown stood out as one thing that went splendidly right. Janey found it almost at once in an exclusive shop where only sheer recklessness could have taken her in the first place, and slipped into it largely as a matter of secret impudence to the impressive saleslady. It was a flame-colored affair with a hint of translucent silver graying its shadows, and it transformed a thin, olive-skinned woman with faint violet shadows underneath her eyes into a slim girl whose hair had the brown of autumn leaves. Janey bought it and paid for it before she took it off, wisely making her extravagance irrevocable while the glamour of its color was upon her; only fearful that in the dun of everyday she might beg piteously to have her money returned to her again.

After that things went wrong. The stuffed dog did not materialize as she had hoped, and she had small news to carry home to Bobs. The work at the Lodge dragged perilously; the women who had promised to come and clean, dawdled; the plumber missed a full half day. The last day dawned in gray clouds with a dull rain swirling at the windows and the perplexing Freshman averages still undone. It was not till noon that Janey, nibbling sandwiches as she sat at the telephone in Stephen Mayo's office, learned that matters at the Lodge were moving with something of clockwork ease. The cleaning women had materialized into being at seven and were even then finishing the living-room floor; Martha had finished the upstairs single-handed, down to the last towel on the bathroom rack; the rugs had come from the cleaners—Bobs reported that the Lizzie had passed him on the Highway as he was going home—and the Judge himself had ordered the single taxi which the town boasted to meet the train soon after five.

"And now there's only Billy Pattison, Stephen. It's this frightful first love affair playing ducks and drakes. Why should you decline 'amo,' when life's writing every mood it has? That Rachel—and I think he *does* know it enough to take him through the hardware business—"

It seemed a simple matter, then, to plan to go home at four, and dress in time to meet the earliest arrivals; to oversee the ordinary dinner and find out whether Bobs *had* scrubbed behind his ears before Hugh arrived an hour and a half later. But she did not. For just

at four, when she was struggling with the final columns of her class report, Bobs burst in upon her, brown freckles vivid over his quite pale face.

"Janey! He's come! Th' taxidermist never did break a promise like you said he would most likely. I saw him in a crate. Oh—Janey, they is just time. He says you can borrow a hammer from the hardware and undo him right there; and Asa's goin' up our way with th' dray—he's got the biggest eyes—for Mrs. Wakefield's new sewing machine— He does not look one bit dead—"

"Asa?" Janey queried, a bit excitedly for a Latin teacher. "Take these down to Mr. Mayo's office, Bobs; and leave them on the desk if he isn't there. He won't be, by this time. Then you go on down to the basement for my umbrella. I didn't dare bring it up here—through the halls. The janitor's a crab when it comes to these floors. He treats them exactly as if they were a sore toe and might be stepped on. I'll meet you at the station."

There were unexpected delays. Borrowing the hardware hammer was a matter of slow, sustained propulsion on Janey's part. Mr. Pattison was somewhat deaf and could be called only by a thumping on the floor with a baseball bat, which his younger son discovered after a long search. Thumping accomplished, explanations ate up precious moments, and the friendly inquiries from the group who had collected about the crate at the station, delayed them longer still. Asa had disappeared by then, and returning, was forced to go over to the garage on the east side to replenish his tank of gasoline. Even after they were started, he

stopped, half-way up the hill, to receive top-voice instructions from his employer, who was used to supper at five and would keep no office hours that hindered him. So it came about that four amazed Macallisters, arriving on schedule and crowding into the town taxi, passed their younger sister on the Highway, careering homeward, tousled and flushed, lurching from end to end of a swaying truck, one arm across the shoulders of a shrieking, triumphant Bobs, and the other encircling a huge stuffed Eskimo dog with gleaming teeth and staring yellow-glass eyes.

CHAPTER II

THE Macallisters lingered long at the table. Janey, sitting opposite her father, realized it with growing nervousness, because, being band-concert night, Martha would be wanting the plates. But no ripple of her disturbance reached the surface. She sat quietly in the high-backed chair, which always seemed too ample for her slenderness, her hands gripping the arms. If her fingers thrummed occasionally against the wood, only Bobs was near enough to notice; and Bobs was sulkily absorbed in his own deep wrongs.

As a matter of fact, Janey was conscious of an irrepressible amusement at the absurdity of proffering the band-concert to the Macallisters as a possible event. Herself, she felt even the first faint lilt of faraway music pulling her to the dusky Square, with its flare of light about the stand where the band played, the horns always a beat behind on the measure; with its line of farmers' wagons drawn up in close battalion along the curb. She loved to mingle in the thick of it, touching elbows with all Fairfield, east and west, watching the boys and girls dancing in the open places at the end of the parking; listening to the friendly human undertone and the gay blare of sound swinging out above it. But imagine presenting that to Alicia, who heard opera in Paris! Or to Franc, Don's dark-eyed wife, who had studied in Munich. Janey

felt a little thrill at the very names. Her glance traveled down the table, stopping at each face, thoughtfully.

Alicia, the oldest of his daughters, sat at the Judge's right. She was tall, with a clean swing of movement that always suggested Artemis, sweeping through the twilight, to Janey, with an odd, amused air of intentional democracy such as it might perhaps have pleased Artemis to wear among human folk. Her skin was creamy-looking, with the texture of heavy bond writing paper, and the red of her lips and brown, golden-flecked eyes were startling splashes of color in its rich pallor. She was well past thirty and looked a possible twenty-seven. Hugh, two years older, might easily have claimed five, except at the rare moments when his recklessly boyish smile flashed across his mouth. Don, a tall fellow with agreeable, near-sighted eyes and an untailored look, was next younger than Alicia in point of age. After him came Mildred, a sleek flame of a woman, smaller than either of her sisters and more vivid. She had Alicia's straight features and narrow eyes; the same long, flexible hands, at once capable and delicate; but there was about her a gay, mocking intensity that was like brilliant polish. She was two years or more older than Janey, and fourteen older than Bobs, who sat at Janey's left. Mere years did not matter in such a case, however. There was the difference of ages. Bobs might still have been claimed by the Crô-Magnons of the later Paleolithic era.

Janey sighed when her eyes reached Bobs. Against the high back of her chair her shoulders sagged wearily.

She had had to clench her hands under the table to keep them from shaking nervously when she poured the coffee, remembering that it was the first dinner they had shared since that dreadful one six years before when she had taken Mother Macallister's newly empty place. They had not once mentioned that—or their mother's name. And they had talked incessantly.

Brilliant talk it was, carrying a tang of worldly interest in its impersonality, just the sort of talk which Janey had dreamed about more times than she could count. But now that it was reality, she found herself losing its drift. Their voices, now and then, sounded a long way off. Partly, it was reaction from the tense expectancy of the week past; partly, it was the necessity of repressing Bobs properly; but more than either, it was her own burning confusion about the Eskimo dog.

It is quite possible that it was symbolic confusion; that the Eskimo dog was typical of the attitude that had built barriers between the Macallisters and Janey. He had first belonged to Hugh, who brought him from Alaska one fall and, tramping off in short order to the Argentine, had negligently transferred responsibility to Bobs. From the moment that Hugh had disappeared and Wolf had lain down at Bobs' feet, trembling through all his body with the wonder of a dog's allegiance, they had been devoted chums, and inseparable. To Bobs the shaggy, uncouth puppy epitomized all the romance of Hugh's wandering life. And when, barely a month before the Macallisters' return, Wolf had dashed unwittingly beneath the wheels of a passing automobile, Bobs was inconsolable.

"He'll be w-wantin' him," he explained to Janey, "you see. Seems like I couldn' bear tellin' him; havin' to take him out to th' grave. What'll he think o' me? Didn' he tell me not to trus' him—stupid ol' lowl, he said. Wolf wasn' used t' modern conveniences. He tol' me t' take *care* o' him."

"It wasn't your fault, dear. It was just an accident. Might happen to any one's dog."

"But Wolf wasn' any one's dog. That's it. You couldn' essplain, hardly. If he's *expectin'* him, it'll be awful sad for Hugh. I wisht I could get him stuffed or somethin' t' sorta soften th' blow."

"Why couldn't we?" She grasped at the straw eagerly. If Wolf had belonged to Alicia or Don, whose points of view were notably adult, she might have hesitated, seeking some other way to assuage Bobs' grief. But she had felt sure of Hugh. He had the grace of comprehension that searches behind results and finds motives. The briefest word of explanation would make Bobs' sorrow dignified and the taxidermist's efforts understandable. It was perhaps Janey's fault that the word had not been spoken. She blamed herself at least. But there were so many things. The explanations necessary to her progression up the Highway had not only taken time but under the Macallister's questionings, turned into somewhat lame apologies. Alicia had called her in to see if Janey minded if the draping of the wistaria cretonnes were changed. Alicia didn't want to hurt any one's feelings, whoever did it, but the whole arrangement was perfectly impossible and it wouldn't take five minutes to change. Martha needed bracing at the crisis of the ordinary

dinner; and Bobs could not work the new shower. She missed driving down with Don to the station, and indeed, was just running down the stairs when Hugh loomed up, lean, brown and familiar in the doorway. Unwarned, he slumped the occasion as badly as possible. He sniffed once as he crossed the threshold and discovered the yellow glass eyes staring at him from a corner of the front hall.

"Smells pretty awful," he said in the midst of an expectant pause. "Doesn't he now?" Mildred laughed.

"We've done our level best—roses and things, Hugh. Janey simply would have it. We tore up the whole house an hour ago to set him up. But it was the event of the Macallister's homecoming. Positively everything had to give way."

Janey's cheeks burned. She did not notice the quick glance that Hugh threw in her direction. But she did see the odd wistfulness in Bobs' eyes give way to scorn. She saw him measure Hugh from his head to his shining boots impudently. He shook hands quite limply when his turn came, yawned once in the face of his family, and without one word of proper greeting disappeared through the back door of the hall.

There had been a little buzz at this rudeness. Janey saw Franc say something in an aside to Alicia, as they crossed the threshold of the dining-room. And she ate what was on the plate before her, unseeingly. The rest found Bobs a good deal of a nuisance, as she knew from experience during their single visits. Don teased and snubbed him by turns. Alicia ignored him throughout her yearly period of relaxation. Mildred

ridiculed him with a flicker of mockery that Bobs resented most of all. Yet she found him amusing after a fashion, too, provided he did not "interfere," as she sometimes complained. Recently Janey had thought much of Hugh's wide knowledge of men in the making, had looked forward to talking over with him the multitude of matters that baffled her. Now, with the Eskimo dog between them, it was impossible. From Bobs' point of view it would be sheer disloyalty on her part; and she held herself to loyalty with Bobs. Moth' Macallister had made much of that—the loyalty of the clan—standing together. The vision of a three-cornered comradeship that had been shaping in her thought through the spring seemed wiped out of existence. She missed it, resenting that Hugh had not taken the pains to understand. It was a relief when, after a brief pause, she could catch Alicia's eye and give the signal for a general exodus from the dining-room.

She held back when they had gone to speak to Martha about the routine for the next day. Bobs, wandering about like a lost soul, stumbled across her path as she went down the back steps.

"I'm going for cream," she said hastily. "Father went over to Mrs. Bradley's on some business, and Hugh's with him. Martha is anxious to get away."

"Martha's taking things darned easy, I claim," the boy retorted with scorn, "puttin' things on you like she does. I'd go if you wanted me, Janey. They's somep'n I'd like awful well to do anyways."

"Not go down-town?"

"They was somep'n I—"

"Not band-concert night, Bobs. Just when we're all home. Father would think that was dreadful. Can't you go in the morning?"

"Well—but they wa—"

"You—you won't be frightened in the dark?" He seemed such a little boy standing there in the dusk. She hastily relinquished the pail under his withering look.

"Sight more interestin' than sittin' out there 'ith them—dubs," he added under his breath.

Janey knew she should have reproved that far from ambiguous after-word, but she was very tired. She felt dull and inert, untempted by the talk that was already in full swing out on the porch. She could hear Alicia's voice curving upward in an argumentative inflection. She hesitated an instant at the hall door; then a half-hour's grace winning her self-indulgence, she turned into the living-room and dropped down, with a deep sigh, on the davenport.

Bobs, sending a most untuneful whistle into the darkness, came upon Hugh sauntering up and down before the cottage where Althea Bradley lived in lavender-scented retirement which was too delicate to be marred by Hugh's cigarette. As he chose to pass this elder brother by with only a monosyllabic greeting, Hugh swung about on him.

"On your way, son?" he asked carelessly, with the usual maddening Macallister air of interference.

"Janey, she's sendin' me for cream." Bobs' answer sounded as if he were sticking out an impertinent tongue, and Hugh took the tone with a sudden intuitive

comprehension. Hostility was unusual with Bobs. He was a friendly soul even among his plethora of grown-up relatives. Prickly defiance sat upon him oddly.

"I took a look at Wolf after dinner," Hugh began, "while I was waiting for Dads to get his papers. Pretty fine job, isn't it?"

Bobs wound an arm and a convenient leg about Mrs. Bradley's gate-post and waited. But he said nothing.

"I guess I was excited about getting home just at first. And hungry. But you might be—oblivious just at first, mightn't you?"

"Janey—she got the very best taxidermist that was in the telephone book. She tol' him by the streets. And she went in special that day she got her pink dress t' make him hurry."

"Like Janey, isn't it? To think of stuffing him."

"Alicia and them—" Bobs caught the bait unwarily. "They're always blamin' things onto Janey. I betcha billion dollars they'd never done it. I betcha they'd never listened to me when I said t' have him stuffed. But Janey—" There was a comradely pause. "Wolf—he was a darn nice dog."

"Yes."

"Kinda—friendly. I felt—I was sorry—kinda when he—he passed on. Never havin' him waitin' at the gate—" Bobs swallowed briefly. "They's a lot o' dubs think this ol' Highway's nothin' but a race-track. Oughta be pinched. Oughta be somebody on a motor-cycle, ridin'. B'lieve me, 'f I was mayor o' this town they wouldn' run over dogs."

"Wolf was growing old, perhaps. And slow. They do go fast down the road. Would you—er—care for something else, Bobs—Boston bull, eh?"

The freckled face glowed. Bobs unwound himself with reluctance.

"Gee! Course, compared to a *live* dog, Wolf's pretty dead. Maybe Janey'd like to have him for hers. Sorta glad you got home, Hugh. S'long."

He left Hugh thoughtful. Possessing some of the rare clairvoyance that penetrates millstone, he knew that Janey had weighed him secretly and found him wanting. His father came out presently with the word that he was to be detained longer than he had expected, and Hugh strolled home alone, settling himself at the rear of the wide porch which encircled two sides of the living-room. There was a sweet chatter of bed-going birds, the smell of cooling earth, and a garden incense that stole over him like a breeze. For a little it was enough to feel the quiet night about him and watch the stars sweep out, one by one, through the dusk. It touched him unpleasantly to find that he was listening to the voices rising above the creak of the wicker swing.

"She's gone for cream," some one said in the hall, lifting the news so that it carried clearly to the porch. "Isn't that Janey all over? As if cream were the most important thing in the universe."

"Petty," Alicia answered in a soft, rich drawl. "Janey's swamped with these ordinary details. Mid-Victorian temperament—but so long as she muddles through somehow, who cares?"

"I care," Don said slowly. "Janey's no place in a rut—"

"But she's happy there."

"I hate that, too. She's too much personality—"

"Mid-Victorian personality." Alicia supplemented idly. "Not a single one of the qualities to which modern women hold themselves. Janey might have been living in the early 'Seventies, for all she responds to the new ideas. No courage—no initiative—there's your new thing. She hasn't got them."

"She teaches," Don objected with a weak argumentativeness.

"Don!" That was Mildred, mocking. "Judge Macallister's daughter could *teach* in Fairfield if she couldn't pound sand. It's no criterion. It's merely the advantage of having a father with pull."

"She keeps the house." That was Frances, and from the intonation which she gave the words, the most casual would have guessed disdain at housekeeping. Franc was a pretty, *petite* woman with pensive ways and a delicate arrogance that shielded her from intimacies. An exotic type, as different as possible from the Macallisters, she still spoke the language which Alicia and Mildred used with subtle understanding. She was really far closer to them than Janey had ever been.

"If she'd only be efficient about it," Alicia answered amusedly, "one might forgive her the choice of occupation. But she's wholly Mid-Victorian when it comes to that, even; doing the things for which women are honored on the supposition that they are the only things that they do well, in the same old tiresome way

that botches most women-run homes. I'm not finding fault, you understand. I'm merely analyzing. Janey keeps the house. Well—Father could find an expert housekeeper—scientifically trained—who would take it over and do twice as much five times as well. Or they could patronize a community kitchen. 'Janey teaches school.' One wonders just how well." There was an effective little pause, giving point to Alicia's quotation. "He who can, does; he who cannot, teaches."

"Bobs is the test, after all," Mildred cut in. "Isn't he the perfect tyrant? Wasn't that dog episode the most typical thing? Imagine—boring poor old Hugh. Wouldn't you think Janey would have had the tact to suppress the youngster the first hour at least? Whatever you say for Janey, you do have to admit that she's failed colossally with Bobs."

From the other side of the glass door Hugh heard a stifled sound. It hardly sounded like a cry, but it could by no stretch of the imagination be interpreted as laughter. He sprang to his feet in time to see the flash of a white skirt about the newel-post and catch the sound of swift footsteps on the stairs; but before he reached the top, he heard Janey's door close and the lock click. He sat down on the top stair as he had been used to do when he was a little boy. Beside him, a wide window looked down across the garden into the next yard, where a tiny stone house grew in the midst of a tangled shrubbery. Behind him was a square hall, lined with shabby bookcases and boasting an old fireplace. Above it hung a portrait of Dale Macallister; a lovely girl, stepping down a long curved stair, her arms filled with her bridal roses, her bridal



She had been half-asleep there on the davenport, and heard her name flicking across her face like a whip.

laces floating about her. Under her dark hair her laughing eyes looked out, as darkly blue as the sapphires, set in quaint links of darkened silver, that clung about her rounded throat. The famous artist who had painted it—a Macallister he was, and very old then—had caught something of the glad, virginal happiness of her wedding morning; something, too, of the girl's inner spirit, her delicious mischief, her gay, young courage, the adventurous buoyancy that Dale Macallister had never lost. Hugh, looking at it fixedly, caught but the glimmer of the gold frame through the dusk. But at that he turned away. He somehow found that he was feeling very—sick.

On the other side of the closed door Janey pressed her hot cheek against the cool pillow and clung to the brass bedposts as if for help.

She was not crying, but step by step she was descending into the blackest depression she had ever known. She had been half-asleep there on the davenport, and heard her name flicking across her face like a whip. She heard it twice before she quite caught the substance of what Alicia was saying. "Mid-Victorian"—"He who can, does—" She felt dizzy, cold, suddenly weak. She had walked slowly toward the hall and stood at the foot of the stairs, saying in a whisper:

"What shall I do? What shall I do?"

Then a movement behind her had startled her, and with a stifled exclamation she had fled straight to the shelter of her room.

Mother Macallister had left Bobs with Janey. Had left him because she believed that Janey could do the

things that must be left undone as Mother Macallister herself had hoped to do them. That was the awful thing about death—the incompleteness. She had said as much, lying there, propped up among her pillows, while her clear eyes roved from face to face. It was only one thing among the many that she had said in that last brave talk of theirs before the time came when there could be no more words between them. And she had chosen Janey. Alicia was already established in New York, pressing her way hardily through the throng of nondescript illustrators. Don and Hugh were out of the question. Mildred was at the very beginning of her engagement to Drury Pennell. Janey was the chosen one of the Macallisters, and now the Macallisters were judging her.

“He who can, does.” That was Alicia and Hugh and Don. “He who cannot, teaches.” That was Janey, who—most ignorant—had sought to teach the youngest of them all the things that Moth’ Macallister wanted him to know. And they had come to find that she had failed. Hour after hour the jumbled memories of that hard day slipped in wretched sequence through her mind—the gray drift of rain, the perplexing Freshman averages, the wild ride up the Highway, the stuffed dog in her arms, and Alicia’s astonished eyes peering out through the window of the Town Taxi as they passed, Hugh’s wide smile, and then with dreary precision, the sound of their voices—

“Mid-Victorian— Whatever you say—she has certainly failed colossally with Bobs.”

CHAPTER III

HUGH woke early. Daybreak was, ordinarily, the time when one rose to pack luggage and put out campfires before the day's travel began. A night or two of rest in a civilized bed made him doubly wakeful. He thought of sinking back into the sensuous luxury of another nap, but he found himself wide awake and more restless than he expected. After a shower and a stroll that took him through the kitchen garden, down to the river and around by the wall to the front gate, he went back to find Martha laying the long refectory table in the dining-room—a sunny place with windows open at either end, their snowy curtains kicking idly in the breeze.

Toward the west, those windows topped a sideboard that occupied the entire width of the room, and offered a capacious storing place for silver and linen. On the wide top a copper bowl or two gleamed duskily, bringing a touch of local color from some far, enchanted corner of the earth. Toward the east the windows were longer, looking out over a vista of wide, sunlit meadows to the river that flowed southward like a piece of silver ribbon, the water iridescent under the milky June sky. There was a seat at this eastern end, wide and inimitably comfortable, and there Hugh lounged, skimming the New York paper that had just arrived for Alicia, enjoying hugely the dull browns

and comfortable coppery colors about him—the fireplace with its double row of tiles from the Durant kilns, the Duncan Phyfe chairs, the wide door, fitted with unusual copper clasps and hinges that swung half-open into a smaller north room, where he glimpsed deep leather chairs and a billiard table. Alicia had done the room over since he had been at home, and he found it interesting partly for its very omissions. It was not Alicia, for instance, who had put the bowls of purple iris here and there against the background of brown chestnut paneling. And it certainly was not Alicia who had found somewhere the flat, quaint, childish napkin holders of carved ivory, yellowed with the years, and put them accurately beside each plate.

That brought him to Janey—and he had been avoiding the thought of Janey persistently. He was the sort of man who gave women in the aggregate a gravely civil attention, and nothing more. He had cared for Marcia Powell since he could remember—Bobs' age, perhaps, was when he began. He always thought of her as a slim, tanned girl, galloping beside him as she had been used to gallop down the Road; swinging a racket above her head from an opposite tennis court; skimming along the top of the snow and nosing among the alders on the level of last year's bird's nests, as she had done the winter after he had given her snowshoes for a Christmas present. It was a memory that served to make other women negative—shadow-like. He viewed them impersonally, even his own sisters. Personally, he felt no need of them. Yet here was Janey—

It seemed to him that Janey lacked many things.

She had not the rich charm that was Alicia's, nor the sure self-confidence. She had none of Mildred's mocking insouciance, nor Frances' dainty hauteur and changing moods. She seemed set apart from the Macallisters by her commonplaceness. Keeping house, school-teaching, were just the things a girl like Janey might be expected to do; the sort of thing nice girls had been doing for a hundred years and longer. It was refined. It was perfectly proper. It was conventional. Was there in her, then, nothing of the venturesome spirit that the rest had from that mother whose gypsy soul went wandering across impalpable marches even while her slender hands dug in her garden or wove strange fantasies up and down the keys of her piano? What did life mean to Janey, anyway? A wild plethora of dissipation it must be, taking charge of a sixteen-room house and teaching school ten months in the year. Did she *like* that sort of thing? With the rest of them away, mousing about their own concerns; coming back just frequently enough to be aloof and critical? What was the summer going to mean to Janey?

She came to the table, quietly, after the rest—with the exception of Bobs—had taken their places. She had wanted to make sure of the muffins, she explained to her father, who nodded absently. Hugh, watching her furtively, found the violet shadows beneath her eyes pitifully plain.

It was Alicia who first noticed that Bobs was absent and mentioned it while the coffee was pouring. She mentioned it again five minutes later, having received no answer to her first inquiry. Janey, white-lipped,

admitted that she had not the faintest idea where he was. Don's keen eyes came up from the morning paper.

"Does he go off like that—when and where he pleases? Without saying a word to any one?"

"Certainly not. Certainly not," Judge Macallister said testily. "Haven't you seen him this morning, Janey? You ought to know where he is."

"Is he—secretive like this?" Frances asked, buttering her muffin. "There's always an age, isn't there, when they're inclined to be sneaky?"

And Don added a word or two as to the necessity of every boy learning punctuality as a future business asset; and Hugh was on the point of reminding Don with more than brotherly frankness that he himself had practically driven the family into hysteria at Bobs' age, when the youngster stumbled across the threshold and belligerently faced the tableful of inquiring faces.

"I been down-town," he informed them hotly, before any one spoke. "Janey wouldn' lemme las' night, and I run jus' as fas' as I could, too. I didn' know it was so late when I got up." He plumped a small but ornate candy box before Janey, turning over her glass of water and streaking the white linen with vivid purple. "I bet they ain't none of you remembered about Janey's birthday."

"Birthday?"

"Is this the twelfth?"

"Birthday, daughter? Let me see. I have it down somewhere. I have all the birthdays down." He began searching his pocket doubtfully for his daily notebook, and brought out his check book, in which, the

date being verified, he immediately began to write. But it was Hugh who pushed back his chair and came around the table to Janey.

"You never forget one of ours. When I reached Chowtsun last February there was a gift waiting—You come up to Town with me, to-day, will you, Janey? How long since you've had a real birthday blow-out? Years, likely. And you're tired. You've looked tired—frightfully—ever since I came."

"Tired?" The Judge looked alarmed. "Are you tired, Janey? That's something unusual, isn't it? Why should you be tired?"

She had no time for reply. Hugh had already swung her chair about and was hustling her out of the room and up the stairs in spite of her faint protests. The Fairfield taxi was already ordered, he insisted. It would come for them in plenty of time; and, indeed, might come any minute if there were other calls for the same train. The seven-fifty-eight left in twenty-five minutes. He was intending to go up to Town anyway and bat about. He was already except for his hat which lay to hand on the hall table. Would she—*rush*?

Then when he had watched her vanish about the turn of the shallow stairway, he closed the door into the hall with seeming absent-mindedness, and came back to his own place at the table. His eyes were darkly blue in his lean brown face. He seemed bored and sleepy, his voice languid, casual.

"Was going up," he vouchsafed after a moment. "Promised Campbell I'd meet him this mornin'. He's some of my stuff in his kit."

It was the name that caught their attention.

"Alan Campbell?" Don asked. "Not *the* Campbell?"

Hugh nodded. He grinned a little at their interest.

"I didn't know you knew *him*. You never said—"

"Janey's done most of the writing *I've* had these last six years. I've been with Campbell on and off for five. He trekked along with me from Seoul. Expected him, of course."

"I met him once," Alicia said. "Years ago, it was. But he was being talked about, even then."

"Sylvia Glennard knew him. There was a boy—some far away cousin, I think," Franc added. "Anyway, he went out as a missionary with nothing but ideals and no particular backbone. No self-knowledge. No idea of his own weakness. It's not a pretty story. The natives called him the Man-who-missed-too-many-boats. But Alan Campbell heard about him—just a boy, he was, stranded out beyond the uttermost ends—and started hunting him up. All across the south seas, he traveled, and thousands of miles out of his way. And he got him on the next boat that left after he found him."

"Enormous distances you can travel down there," Hugh said. He made no comment on the incident.

"What sort is he, Hugh?" Alicia asked indulgently, after a moment. "What's his type?" Hugh pushed back from the table and stood about on the hearthrug in different corners. It betokened restlessness. The conversation was not making for the point he had in mind.

"He's not—typical. He's Campbell. Bachelor and hard as nuts. Amusin'. Decent. Fixed in his habits.

Whims—" He gave an indescribable gesture indicative of a multitude of fancies. "Beyond believin'. Nothing gets by him, good or bad. Likes talk. Likes quiet when he's in the mood. Intensive sort. Works tremendously, Alan does."

"Why don't you ask him out?"

Hugh hesitated, looking more bored than ever.

"Look here. You aren't huntin' a lion? Campbell couldn't stand that. And I'd never ask it of him. Sickenin', bein' petted. Alan just does the next thing when the next thing comes along. Government likes that little trick of his. Keeps him at it—next things pilin' up ahead. As for trucklin' around lettin' women make eyes and rave about his looks—"

"Are you trying to tell us he doesn't care for women?" Alicia asked, a curl of amusement on her mouth.

"Alan's way—" Hugh considered a moment. "Alan's way of life, women—aren't. Imagine a woman trampin' Luzon as he'll be doin' in another year. Preposterous! But if you think he's contemptuous. If you think he's a Schopenhauerian—I'll ask him out," he finished, flashing his reckless smile at them. "If Janey doesn't mind."

"Janey? Why on earth should Janey mind? We've always had heaps of company."

"Yes," Hugh agreed a thought decisively, "I've noticed that. People motor from Florida to Oregon for the summer, and start from Ispheming for Texas and stop off. Point is, Janey's hostess here—really. For all it must have been a rather ironic recollection to her last night."

There was a full moment of silence. The Judge's shrewd glance traveled from one flushing face to another. Bobs, stoking waffles with the precision of a small machine-gun, looked up, keenly interested.

"What do you mean? Last night?"

"Soul speakin' to soul," Hugh observed. "With the windows open."

"But Janey went for—"

"Bobs went for cream. Didn't you, sonny? Janey was lyin' on the davenport where she couldn't miss the details. Makes entertainin' easy—that."

"Of course, we're not really—guests."

"What then? I noticed none of us made haste to the kitchen to see that the bacon was right this mornin'. *We* didn't look to the muffins. *We*—"

"I don't remember that we said anything so dreadful," Alicia remarked with subtle truculence. "Bobs, I wish you wouldn't drink half a glass of water at one swallow."

Hugh took a long stride from second to third base on the hearthrug and looked down at Alicia.

"Out in the Land of the Rising Sun," he said languidly, "you hear a bunch of women talkin' just that same silky way. Vocabulary's a bit different. They don't say 'Mid-Victorian' and smack their lips. Nor quote Bernard Shaw. But the tone's much the same. Out there they've done it—ages. Just ordinary women, self-superior—talkin'."

"Don't be quite insufferable, Hugh. Making mountains out of molehills. Taking things personally."

"Personally." Hugh swung about and took a step back to his original position. "My intention defined.

"Y'understand, I'm takin' everything—touchin' Janey, I mean—personally. All summer." He threatened. Mildred laughed.

"Chivalry—verily in our midst. And a thousand years *passée*. Janey won't even be aware of the protection."

"That's no matter." He came closer and spoke soberly. "We made a lot of talk here last night about the amazing commonplace. Alicia said it took training to realize—common things. And we all put in instances. How any one could be led up to one of 'Licia's pictures and rave about the real colors there, and yet never see 'em in a sunset sky. How anybody can go to a vaudeville house to hear some gink whistle like a bird, and yet never hear a bird in all their days. How most people, trampin', never see *arbutus* under the snow."

"What is your analogy?" Alicia drawled impertinently. But Hugh had no time to reply. Janey called him from the hall. She did not come again into the dining-room. She managed a very gay-sounding good-by to them from the threshold.

Within two minutes of the time the Town Taxi had left the Lodge gate, the Macallisters were deep in a veiled debate as to the best method to meet the somewhat difficult situation. They were women who preferred comfortable relationships, and were deft enough to turn aside most of the unpleasant mischances of existence. If Janey were going to be absurd about a cool, impersonal conversation—

"She does look tired," Frances said, with a lift of the eyebrow toward Bobs. "Poor dear."

"Nice of Hugh, taking her off," Mildred added. "If she sets store by birthdays—"

"Of course, if we gave her anything now— Not that we could get anything in Fairfield—it would look—"

"Exactly. But we could do something—special. Make her the center of us all. Family celebration, you know. - And if Hugh's Mr. Campbell comes—"

It was to their credit that Mildred's veiled idea was comprehensible. But the Macallisters were like that. To any one not of their mind; their conversation was quite unintelligible, the gaps and chasms so stupendous that there was no bridging them. Of abstract things, they could wrangle endlessly with a fire that had lambiency but little heat. In personal talk they developed queer pauses, making a most trivial statement important with an inflection, conveying a meaning that seemed quite unattached to the simple spoken words. If Mildred had said plainly—"By making Janey, our wren, the central interest of a brilliant family gathering, we will give this distinguished traveler a unique experience which will put all of us in the most pleasant possible light"—no one would have misunderstood her any more than they misunderstood her as it was. Frances expressed the general doubt that Janey, taken by surprise, would be able to play up to the occasion. What she said was:

"Too tired, perhaps,—after Town."

"We'll make it simple," Alicia said. "We ought to give her something, really."

Judge Macallister had been silent during the debate.

He felt the undercurrent and half resented it. Janey had stayed closest, after all, when the others, brilliant worldlings, in whose successes he delighted, had strayed away. Hugh's flaming defense, too, had impressed his father. He welcomed some defined ending to the incident, something that would push it into the limbo of forgotten things. There was a hint in Alicia's generous "We'll have to give her something—"

"I—wanted to make some disposition of the family jewels," he said slowly. "Divide them—this summer. You might as well have the use of them—you girls. Your Aunt Mate's came to us in February—a few really choice diamonds. She had all your Grandmother Chapin's. Old settings, of course. And there are my mother's. Garnets. And—ah—the—the—sapphires. Three generations—down in the vault."

"Hardly diamonds," Franc said. "Not for Janey."

"You ought to have the garnets," Mildred told her, "with your eyes."

"Janey's are blue," Alicia put in. "Sapphires ought to be good—one really fine bit. Shall we say sapphires?"

So the Judge took one ring—and a very beautiful one—from the vault and carried it over to the jeweler's that morning for cleaning. Frances and Alicia coaxed Martha into more than ordinary efforts for Janey's birthday dinner. The only thing that went awry in their careful plans was that Alan Campbell did not come.

Hugh's arrangements and Janey's dovetailed beautifully. They had not more than left the station, and

held the small reception which Fairfield's club car felt was Hugh Macallister's due, when Janey gave him a sidelong look.

"Is this really a bat?" she asked.

"Imagine spendin' a leisurely day in Chicago and not goin' the limit," Hugh returned. "Two years since I've seen an elevated. Only not the stock-yards. I'm not quite up to that."

"You know," Janey went on, "that I feel exactly like a subcutaneous sister to that friend of Mrs. Hawk-shee's, who always looked as if she stood in the center of the room and let her husband throw her clothes at her. I'd like to revel—fixing up. If you could keep busy for an hour or two."

Hugh looked at her, sitting quietly beside him, her slim brown hands resting on her lap, her gloves carelessly thrown across her knee. She was wearing a dull brown suit with some frilly white stuff at the throat. Her hat crowded down on her hair attained at best a flat respectability—a rather dubious virtue in hats. It stood, it seemed to Hugh, for Facts—for Pedantry.

"You look all right," he said with brotherly brusqueness.

"It's the feeling," Janey explained. "Sort of a Cleopatra feeling. Somebody smoothing you—luxury in toto—and all the time in the world."

"I see. I want to look up Alan Campbell, anyway."

"Did he come back with you? You wrote from Korea—"

"You'd like him, Janey. Would it be inconvenient for you if he came out over the week-end? May I ask him?"

She flushed a little with sheer pleasure at his deference.

"We keep the little bedroom back of the billiard room for men guests. It's always ready."

"I see," Hugh said again. It sounded absurdly simple. Not at all like the muddle Alicia had hinted at. Perhaps Mid-Victorians took housekeeping unprofessionally and made hospitality a recreation. He accepted Janey's Mid-Victorianism himself, even though he resented the appellation. She was certainly not like the others.

At the terminal he called a cab and, putting Janey into it, went himself to the club where Alan Campbell was staying. It proved a simple matter to find him. He was in the library, busy with the morning's mail. And Hugh, dropping into a deep chair, waited while he wrote brief answers and sealed envelopes.

"Frisbie called up a moment ago," he said presently. "I'm to have dinner with them to-night."

"I wanted to know. I was to ask you out for Sunday if you'd nothing else. The Macallisters want you."

"I'd like it. To-morrow—would to-morrow do? Did they all arrive?"

"There's a dance at the club to-morrow night, I believe," Hugh said. "Franc, my brother's wife, was talkin'. Yes, they all came." He was silent a moment. "They've such a vocabulary," he blurted. "Such a tumblin' of phrases—quite new. 'Economic independence,' they say; an' 'women and labor'—and what the war does. Of course, when you realize how fast they're goin'—batterin' away centuries in just a human life-

time—it's no great wonder they pick up a coinage for their chatter. But why—use it—continually. They change so—women. Have you ever noticed? Once we come home and they're athletic. Shoulders astonishin' they had—like pile-drivers. And now they're fluffy—outside. Underneath—hard. Queer thing—” He had an impulse to tell the man of the Macallisters' conversation the night before. But he thought better of it. Considering his nascent irritation at Alicia, it was an unaccountable clannish loyalty that held him. He let Alan think that the queer thing was his own viewpoint on women.

“One of them came up with you?”

“Not one of them. Janey. She looks after the house.”

“Different—eh?”

“Oh, quite. Janey doesn't talk. Lets you alone, rather. Looks after you, too. Very simple sort.”

“I should like,” Alan said whimsically, “to see just one woman who was a—simple sort.”

“Yes? I think *she* is. Just a nice, ordinary girl. You'll see her. Not that there is much.”

“Beautiful?”

“Beautiful? Not by a long shot. Don't go expectin'.”

But for all his unconscious judgment which was, essentially, the same as Alicia's, Hugh made the day into a wonderful pageant for Janey. Her first thought when he mentioned the trip to Town was a wordless thanksgiving that she was released from the immediate society of the Macallisters. She told herself grimly that she was palpably Mid-Victorian when it came to

hiding hurts. Her lips were wobbly and her voice threatened to go thick at nothing. Bobs' light half-pound box of candy with its purple cover was not a matter of tears, for instance. And there might be other things. In Town she had a leisurely morning, luxuriating under the expert hands that massaged her face and brushed her hair until it shone silkily. She was a tinglingly different person when she went to meet Hugh for lunch, and the luncheon itself was different from anything she had had before. Hugh exerted himself, for one thing, and Hugh Macallister was known in various great cities of the earth as the most delightful companion man could desire when he chose to make the exertion. He had bought tickets for the last matinée of the season and a box of candy ten times the size of Bobs', which they nibbled in the darkened auditorium with the appetite of youngsters. They had a cool ride home, late in the afternoon, through an open country with a veil of living green on its distant trees, dappled sunlight on the gray road that ran beside the track and a thousand summer scents—lilacs, lilies, young box, flags. It was not until they reached Fairfield that Janey's heart sank from its soaring.

The house revealed a cool orderliness—and more. There was a faint fragrance of roses; the dining table held gala candelabra and a heap of birthday letters in a woven basket stood at her chair. Through the haze of soft yellow lights the Macallisters smiled at her, as if they were making her welcome—sent little jokes in her direction. The soup was piquant, the chicken tender and done to a golden brown—Janey was unaccountably hungry. She dipped into her letters,

reading snatches from them and listening for their gay comments on the packages that had arrived during the day. For the Macallisters were talking, as they always talked, with jibes and running laughter and small eddies of conversation at the edge of the main stream. Only when the cups were pushed back, Judge Macallister himself rose in finished, after-dinner fashion.

"I—started to write you—ah—a check this morning, daughter." He began, beaming at her over his tortoise-rimmed glasses, "but as I—ah—looked at you sitting at the head of my table—performing its duties so—ah—capably, I thought of a gift that we might make more—personal. The children—ah—welcomed the idea. We feel—all of us—that a girl who fulfills every-day responsibilities has a sort of commonplace courage that merits—thanks. Courage—" he paused. It was an unfortunate choice of words, since it was incompatible with the Mid-Victorian. But the Judge did not know. "We think *that* all of us," he said with gentle emphasis and laid down a tiny box which eager hands pushed on to Janey. "We wish you all to have—this. Sapphires suit you, we think."

It was her mother's engagement ring. She recognized it instantly, the dearest of all Dale Macallister's treasures. Yet her mother had not been mentioned. If they would speak her name—it seemed for the moment that her hunger was almost more than she could bear. She stood, twisting the ring about her finger, a faint question in her eyes as they went from face to face. Didn't they—care? Were they afraid to speak of grief and loss? Of anything that was a part of life? Had they given her the ring simply through uncaring

kindliness? Her look crossed Hugh's; his eyes held hers smilingly. She pushed back her chair and flung open the door.

"Come, all of you," she cried. "Come on and sing."

It was a graceful thing for Janey to do, the Macallisters agreed. They enjoyed singing. And they did it well, as they did everything. Frances led them, her rich, trained contralto filling the dim room with sweetness. Hugh, turning the pages, shouted a mellow baritone into Janey's ear. Bobs nestled sleepily against her shoulder, hummed, following the rest. It was a simple thing enough—that singing. But to the Judge, smoking quietly in the corner, Frances and Don, Alicia and Hugh and Mildred seemed but a living background to Janey's glowing face. For to the Judge alone it occurred that Janey was doing the one thing that Mother Macallister would have done in her mother's own dearly-remembered way.

CHAPTER IV

As he took the first afterdinner train down to Fairfield next day, Campbell bought a magazine at the stand in the outer passageway of the Terminal—a great, tiled place, splashed with color from gay-flowered hats and brilliant sweaters of women on their way to some country club or week-end. He bought it because, in an article on porcelains of the Ming dynasty, there was a paragraph and thumbnail sketch of Hugh. And he skimmed through it while he waited for his train to back into the spur of track opposite, half-attentive to the confusion roaring about him—the buzz of cabs beyond the iron grating toward the street, the locomotive panting in the train-shed, porters swiftly manipulating trucks piled high with baggage, weaving through the crowd. When he had finished the thickly illustrated page or two, he turned back to the contents and ran down the column. It was one of the smarter periodicals, new and artificially cynical, that had begun to flourish since his last home-coming. The name Macallister twice caught his eye. One was a full-page copy of a painting by Alicia, the other a satiric quatrain by Don. Was it a conceit of the editor, he wondered, this playing up of three Macallisters in a single number? Or was it that they were the clever type who gravitated naturally into such a pamphlet? At the least, it served

to place the family for him, in their intellectual habitat, so to speak. He had heard of Alicia, met her casually, years before, when she showed promise rather than achievement. Don he knew through the unquestionably trenchant clippings from a Chicago paper that sometimes were sent to Hugh in his letters from home. Hugh himself had mentioned another Macallister. A girl, staying at home; a simple sort, Hugh had said. It probably meant a stupid sort, since it was evident she had made no slightest mark beside the bold, dashing strokes of the others. By the time he had reached the little stone station at Fairfield he had them neatly docketed, and he greeted Hugh, who was waiting for him in Don's runabout, with anticipatory relish. A freckled, friendly youngster took Alan's bag off with him on a battered bicycle and the two men drove directly to the country club. Twenty minutes later, as they sauntered from the well-filled, well-lighted hall into the comparatively dim spaces of the porch, they were hailed, gently, by a slim woman sitting in a fan-backed chair, the high, flaring back rising above her head and shoulders like a cunningly checkered frame. She wore a gown of white tulle, very shimmering and very fluffy, with a knot of gold somewhere at the girdle and gold-colored slippers. Her lips were rouged, delicately, and delicately accented with a bit of black court-plaster at the corner. Her eyes behind long, dark lashes were brown, with startling flecks of gold in the iris.

"I'm lying in wait for you," she said plaintively, in the clearest, smoothest voice that Alan ever remembered hearing. And after the briefest moment. "Well,

Hugh, are you bringing the conventions of Lahore into the Middle-west? I'm quite—unveiled. And Mr. Campbell is already—wistful.”

“My sister, Mrs. Pennell,” Hugh explained. “Where are the others?”

“Licia is holding an old home week out in the pergola. Don is dancing—with his wife. Janey just came up the walk with Marcia, I believe. Run on, Hugh, and find them. I'll bring Mr. Campbell.”

But not directly, Alan discovered. She sat silent, her eyes drifting idly from one corner of the wide rooms to another. Then she yawned.

“I should like to smoke just one cigarette,” she said softly, “for the benefit of Fairfield.”

She took one from the box he held out, lit it and indicated a chair nearby.

“If you listen very closely,” she murmured, “you will hear a sigh of satisfied expectancy rippling like a breeze across a cornfield.” Alan bent his head.

“It's past,” he said very low, after a moment, and they smiled at each other understandingly. “Do you enjoy smoking?”

“For the benefit of Fairfield,” she assured him. “Women here—don't. They merely envy the daring of those who do. In New York—”

“Yes?”

“It's not so necessary. Not the—astounding effect. This,” she tipped the cigarette and smiled at it above a trailing wisp of smoke, “will reach my mother-in-law when her breakfast tray arrives at seven a. m. to-morrow. My husband—let me see; this is Saturday—my husband will have the news by Thursday next. It will

annoy him," a mischievous grin made her face for a moment look marvelously like an impudent child's, "excessively."

"You like that?"

"You're not married, Mr. Campbell?" It was a statement rather than a query in spite of the upward inflection. "I see. You have still your illusions. It all makes one feel unconquerably old."

"Twenty-five?" Alan hazarded. She made an impertinent face.

"Thanks. Nearer twenty-eight. Younger than you—seven years or more. I looked you up yesterday," she said graciously, "to see—if you were eligible."

"I trust—"

"Oh, quite, quite. It's only fair to warn you of possible intentions. One hates playing a game in the dark. The more so if you *have* illusions," she added, politely mocking.

"I'm grateful. Shall we go further? What, for instance, do you do—for a living?"

"Being a Macallister? Of course. One should do something. Let me think. Say—since you ask it—that I'm a fisher of men. Men," she added with a shake of the head toward a blonde youth, waiting in the doorway with lifted eyebrows, "not boys. I'm the sort who prefers caviar to baked individual custard. You would understand"—her eyes widened demurely—"if you had ever met my husband—"

"A—custard, I take it?"

"And not *quite* done," Mildred said regretfully. "Flavorless—"

"At the dish long?" Alan asked sympathetically.

"A lifetime. Two. *I was* so bored. Looking back I'm surprised that I stood it."

"Perhaps you were fond of him."

"Perhaps. Still the thought of freedom is wonderfully exhilarating. In the fall," she explained, "as soon as I reach New York."

"Why not here? With your family?"

"You don't understand. Fairfield? My dear man, the code of the Court of St. James is tolerance compared with this. It simply isn't done."

"I see. Till fall, then—"

"Till fall," Mildred murmured.

"You are seeking—amusement, suited to your age—"

"And state of disillusionment."

"I am always a trifle afraid of a woman who admits to disillusionment. Still—you are remarkably clever, aren't you?"

"Oh, sir."

"If you will permit me—"

He merely rose and proffered her his arm, but she took it with a gamin-like grin.

"I suppose," she said languidly, "that it is time to look up the others. Fairfield already is considering, doubtless, that I have thrown out my net." She did not speak again until they were descending the steps to the pergola at the end of the porch. "I expected to like you," she said frankly. "It's quite all right."

Campbell gave that a modicum of consideration, as she probably intended he should. He liked the finished product in women, usually. He preferred persiflage to serious analysis. Moreover there was a pert vivacity

about Mildred that gave her the aspect of an impudent gamin. He understood that the cigarette had not escaped the eyes of Fairfield. A thin buzz followed them down the long porch. Apparently the Macallisters did not notice; they seemed above oblivion even. They welcomed him in a friendly fashion and included him in the group which was holding an informal court in the pergola. They were all there, in and out, with the exception of Janey who, Alicia explained, had left early. Some school-teacher or other was walking home with her. On the way back to the Lodge he gathered that a festivity of some sort was planning. Alicia, running up the steps ahead, called out to some one in the living-room.

"Janey, Janey, is Monday night free? We're thinking of a dinner. Mr. Campbell," she interpolated. "You missed seeing him at the club." She turned to press on a shaded light near the davenport. It sent a dapple of light across the shoulders of a girl lying there and touched some vivid threads in hair that looked merely dark. She sat up hastily, smoothed it back from her forehead, spoke his name pleasantly. Then she turned to Alicia.

"How many?"

"Oh—twenty, or less. I told one or two at the club to hold the date open and we would let them know. The Glennards and Vibarts. Hugh'll want Marcia, of course; and I'm asking Arnold Cope—"

"In such a way that he must look to himself a very safe person to-night," Don threw in. "I wish you had seen his face. Alicia's invitation carried the information definitely that if she had considered him dangerous

in the slightest degree, he would never have had it—even as a filler-in."

Alicia laughed easily.

"He should be married by now," she said. "Judgment on him, being a filler-in. When I think I was actually engaged to him betimes—the gods preserve their own."

They were astounding, these Macallisters, Campbell thought. Had they no sentiment? Or was it that they had no reserves? Did they mock irreverently at ordinary things, as Mildred mocked at the marriage that must, before she broke its bonds, have brought her pain; as Alicia spoke of a love affair that, in its time, must have meant something? The man at least had not married. Hugh, too. He had known Hugh Macallister for years, and never heard of Marcia Powell. Even now he could only guess what lay behind those two. Hugh's satire was all for women. Alicia's, apparently, for men. Yet they were both the sort in whom one looked for depths. With all that superficial lack of reserve did they hold something in secret places that was deep and tender? He was recalled by Alicia's brisk voice.

"Who will you have, Janey?" And he saw a red spot flare suddenly in the center of the girl's cheeks.

"Stephen Mayo," she said quietly.

There was a short pause. Alicia and Frances exchanged glances. Mildred yawned a little behind her hand.

"I thought I might ask Eric Vollmar down," Frances suggested. "The impresario— We'd likely have music, and he would fit in."

"Then we could ask Anne, too," Janey hesitated. "I'd very much like to ask Anne if there is a place."

"We hardly know Anne." There was another silence which Frances presently interrupted tactfully.

"Would you have a caterer, Janey?"

"Martha's hard to manage with outsiders. If you would be content with simple things—"

"Play up simplicity. Why not? No one else ever does."

"I know. We could have an extra waitress or two," Janey conceded, "but for myself, long ago, I gave up trying any other way. There's a better spirit abroad in the house when you aren't—" she paused an instant as might befit a Virgil teacher before a choice of the exact word—"throwing any dog," she finished evenly.

Hugh came in, then, from the back hall. He swung a chair about and sat down. Without asking, they knew that he had come from Marcia. There was no one else who could make Hugh look quite as he did then. Campbell, from his chair in the corner, studied him incredulously. He seemed a different person with an oddly vibrant note in his voice and unsullied laughter. And he seemed to care not a whit who saw the new quality, or how well they understood it.

"We're planning a dinner," Alicia told him, "for Mr. Campbell. Some of the old crowd. Marcia, of course."

"Of course. Who else?"

"The Glennards, the Vibarts, Cope. Eric Vollmar, probably. That's all except Janey's guest. Whom did you decide to have, Janey?"

"Stephen Mayo," Janey said again.

Alan felt the tension in her voice. She made no effort to secure their interest for this man. She was leaning forward, her elbows on her knees, her face between her hands, in an attitude so unstudied that it might have been a man's. Evidently the others were indifferent to, or even disliked, this Mayo. Yet she held to him. Was he a lover? Janey answered that.

"He's probably the best friend I have in Fairfield," she said.

"The only sail on the horizon?" Some one asked humorously, and a painful color flushed again into Janey's cheeks. "Dove-gray, at that? Hardly a boat to sail the seas with swift brigs like Arnold Cope and Mr. Vollmar. Eh, Janey?"

Janey's eyes went slowly round the circle. She smiled, slowly, and not at all as if she were enjoying the joke.

"Since we must be nautical, I'd hardly think to ask a guest of mine to compete with Jolly Rogers. But with a small flatboat now—along shore—"

"Why not Miss Anne Mayo?" Hugh cut in quietly. "So long as we're asking Stephen?"

"Oh! We are asking Stephen?" Mildred's cool voice gave the possibility the touch of absurdity.

"It seems we are." There was a quiet edge in the vibrant tone. Franc reached across the table and swept a pad toward her.

"Call them right up, will you, Janey?" she capitulated. "Now. I'll put down the names of those who accept. You're virtually hostess, you know."

Janey sat a long time at the telephone in the little

closet off the hall. The connection was atrocious, but she was hardly aware of that. She wondered if they were going to clash, suddenly, over unconsidered trifles that summer. Wondered, too, why it seemed a matter of overwhelming necessity to stand against their will in the matter of Stephen's coming. He was quiet, hardly congenial with men of the world, as Alicia had said, unassuming, shy. She felt bruised from the encounter, the modicum of pleasure which she might expect from a Macallister party already lessened by their laughing indifference. It would have been a more graceful thing to have yielded in the beginning. Not to have permitted Hugh to bring the point to issue. Stubborn, she was.

She shook the receiver impatiently. How had they appeared to this new guest? She had hardly looked in his direction, so embarrassing had been the discussion. It was humiliating; forced to stand out that way against her own tribe. "The only possible sail on the horizon—and dove-gray?" It made her position unbearably false. It was too nearly true—That "only possible sail" shaved exactitude, save that even Stephen was but an embryo possibility.

Anne, at last, thank Heaven—and incredibly stupid. She had the worst possible time making her understand what it was she wanted. The Macallisters would have no patience at all if she proved as slow at a dinner-party. It was a relief to gain her acceptance both for herself and her brother and cut the message short.

"Max and Sylvia," some one called from the living-room.

The Glennards proved equally hard to ring, and ob-

tuse to the last degree. So did the Vibarts, who came next on Franc's list. Dull as whit-leather, Janey decided, and hardly on that account to be desired, any more than Stephen. It was a slow, painful process down the list. She grew impatient waiting for the long ringing, for the buzzing, always poor in Fairfield's antiquated system, in her ear. She waited till the last to call Marcia. The answer there came immediately.

"I'll come, of course, my dear. A lovely thing to think about to-night while I'm awake. Apparently I haven't a drowsy fiber in me. But—do you know what time it is?"

"Late, is it?" Janey asked idiotically. She was answered by a solitary sharp exclamation in the room behind her; the snapping of watches. Then Don's voice, calling:

"Janey, you have done it. It's one and after. Calling those Innocents out of their beauty sleep when the party's two days off—my word!"

It was an hour after that, when the others had been gone upstairs some time, that Alan broke the comfortable silence of a bedtime smoke with Hugh. During the interim he had chuckled several times within himself at the climax of the evening; a typical occurrence of the Macallister ménage, he gathered; the sort of thing to be expected of self-absorbed people who were somewhat oblivious of everything save their peculiar desires. Not one of them thinking of the time, merely because their interest in this family dinner party was, for the moment, paramount. It seemed characteristic of all of them except the young one. What was her name? Janey—

"Nothing out of the way, you said," he broke out.
"Simple, you said—"

"Who? What about it?"

"There's an unpretentious energy about her. You miss that in many women. Easy to see she's awed with the rest of you. Hard for her, standing out for this Mayo as she did. I shall be glad to see him. Who is he?"

"Mayo? Schoolmaster—typical. Stranger in Fairfield."

"Meaning—"

"Oh—he's been here upwards of ten or twelve years, I'd say. Janey herself was still in school. But not belonging, if you get me. Decentish chap enough. As for Janey's sticking out—there's two ways of lookin' at it. Neither of them any business of mine. It might be—principle. Loyalty to friendliness—that sort of thing. Or it might be, well—

"Interest?"

"It's on the knees of the gods. They must see a good bit of each other. It's not such a bad look-out at that. Work for the day, together; and for the evening, a quiet browse with books they both like. There's worse than that."

"Then, for all you know, there's an understanding?"

"For all I know? Lord, man, I don't know a thing about the rest. Nor they about each other. We've ties, of a sort. Bindin', too. But as for knowin'—"

"You're a queer lot."

"Best that way," Hugh argued. "Mindin' your own. Too big gaps to be filled between whiles. Take Alicia. I never knew why she ditched Cope—in her teens she

was. There's never been any one else. Ever. For either of 'em."

"Career, perhaps."

"Likely enough. I've not asked. Take Don. I never knew he'd looked at a girl till I had his wedding-cards. I tell you I don't even know now what's up with Mildred. And jolly well crushed I'd find myself if I asked. Yet I liked Dru—I mean to keep on likin' him. Look him up next time I'm in New York—"

"Bored, she told me."

"Did she?" Hugh yawned widely. "It's more than she's said to any of us. But it's probably true."

CHAPTER V

"WHEN I have a house of my own—" Janey began and stopped with a quick thanksgiving that the kitchen was empty. It was the most ancient of the Macallister jokes. Even at nine, Janey had never said, "If I marry—" as the others did. She had said, "When I marry," with all the confidence bred of a staunch faith in fairy-tales with happy endings. The habit was greeted then with chuckles that grew deeper and richer as the years lengthened.

"Janey's a good scout," Don admitted to the men he brought home with him from college. "Been on the look-out for a husband since before she was ten. Her only failing."

Sooner or later every one who came to the house heard the particular phrase which gave the Macallisters such pleasure. Occasionally it cut short a possible friendliness on the part of guests who possessed tremors and lacked humor of the Macallister variety. Oftener the effect was observable on Janey herself. Janey had never waited for a tacit withdrawal. She effaced herself before it happened; and by so doing lost, perhaps, such friendliness as she might have had. She had, however, her moments of absent-mindedness.

It was a hot day. The morning had begun with a brisk heat that by the middle of the afternoon had decayed into a mere swelter. It was the first attack

of the summer, sweeping across the stretch of prairie-land, to be fought back by the wind that came from the tumble of cool water thirty miles away; an eternal, merry warfare renewed each June. For the moment the battalions of heat were victorious. The sun beat down triumphantly on the meadows to the south of the Lodge and shimmered across the glancing stream at their foot. The carefully shadowed rooms of the house itself were cool, but in the kitchen the heat came in waves that seemed to strike against bound and helpless victims; and it was in the kitchen that Janey happened to be.

Hugh and Bobs thoughtfully had gone fishing; the Judge had gone to Town with Don in the morning; Alicia and Mildred and Frances were taking a siesta against the evening. It had, to do them justice, occurred to none of them that a simple little dinner might mean a good deal of work. Alicia entertained rarely, being a diner-out herself, and when she did, telephoned home that there would be six at the table, and left the matter in the hands of the capable, middle-aged Englishwoman who kept house for her. Mildred and Franc were bred to the excellencies of club dining-rooms and expensive restaurants and their working presence left Martha a muttering, snarling medley of wrathful phrases within an hour, which made matters a trifle difficult for Janey. In her soul she was positively grateful that they had not mentioned helping her. She had purposely spoken very lightly of the little dinner, in response to their perfunctory suggestions as to menu. Now, with the thermometer climbing on the back porch, she found herself regretting the habit of informal hos-

pitality that sat so graciously upon the Macallister household.

"When *I* have a home—" she said again, as she beat the whites of eleven eggs frenziedly.

"Well—" some one said from the doorway.

Janey released the egg-beater with a disastrous spatter of froth and turned about. She was hardly pleased to see Alan Campbell; hardly, she thought, tactful of him to set to wandering idly about the house when Hugh had gone fishing. She found herself regarding him speechlessly; and remembered that she had not found the time to notice him before. The first night, in the hurry of the Macallisters' insistent planning, she had only been aware of him uncomfortably, somewhere behind her in the shadows of the room. Sunday had been a family holiday, with cousins dropping in from the towns all up and down the Highway to welcome the wanderers, and neighbors strolling out from Fairfield at all hours. She had never really seen him until this moment when he stood in the doorway, the wavy, slanting sunshine framing him in a rectangle of white light. Now she saw him for a personable creature, taller than Hugh and healthily bronzed. His hair was very dark and grew in a quaint peak brushed away like a fine brace, laid supine across his forehead; his face seemed extraordinarily expressive for a man, arched at the nostrils, square in the forehead, firmly molded about his straight-lipped mouth. His brows were narrow and widened a little toward the temples, as if they had been painted with one stroke of a skillful brush; and the eyes beneath seemed variable, now green-gray, now gray, now gray-blue. She could not decide easily. It

might have been the queer foreign-looking tie of mingled green, gray and blue that by some nefarious magic wrought a reflection of its own coloring. But she saw that they were narrow eyes with a singularly direct, unwavering glance. She sighed, accepting the man's presence in her hot kitchen, and picked up her egg-beater.

"When I have a home of my own," she remarked firmly, "I shall not give dinners in June."

"Good idea," Campbell agreed, leaning against the doorframe, his hands pushed deep into his coat pockets. "Picnics are better; and I do not mean silly affairs, either, where you tote baskets the size of wardrobe trunks, and ice-cream freezers and white tablecloths. I mean—"

"You mean bacon-bats," Janey interrupted. "Crisped over a wood-fire and eaten with thick bread and coffee."

"It's something to find an understanding soul. Experiences behind that?"

"Contrasts, rather," Janey suggested with a hint of weariness. Would the man stand there all the afternoon? "Dinners for twenty in June. Although it is all going to be very simple," she added apologetically.

"Nothing is simple, once you begin thinking in terms of cut-glass and silver. The standards of the leisure classes—"

"Pussy-cat standards, they are. Sit by the fire and lick up the cream. One does grow so fat at it, in no time at all."

Alan crossed the kitchen and stood beside her high stool. It was a wide, old-fashioned kitchen, but his

stride was that of a man accustomed to going rapidly across wide spaces.

"I'm going to help you," he said calmly, before Janey found breath to object. "It's years since I've been in a place like this. What is there that I can do?" The smile on his mouth set a final impression to the thin, keen face and quiet, smiling eyes. Janey's uneasiness vanished before the man's simplicity. She began all at once to feel less constrained and shy than she did with any one in the world except, perhaps, Stephen Mayo.

"But you mustn't bother," she said. "Martha and I are getting through nicely. You just caught me indulging in spinsterish fretting."

"Cream to freeze, isn't there?" he demanded, ignoring both her politeness and her apology. "Where's the ice? I'll pound that. You do something else. Something you can do sitting down. I'll be ready for a walk, time you're through."

"So?" Janey went back to her high stool, hooking her heels comfortably about a rung, and turned to a bowl of egg yolks. "Did you think we were as nearly done as all that? As for me, I always begin a magazine at the last article and read frontwards—"

"A contrary woman, I see."

"—And it's the same with a dinner. We begin with the cake and work toward the soup; Martha's crisping lettuce and fixing crackers now, while I'm working at mayonnaise. There's a good bit yet: roast, vegetables, grapefruit—"

"You like good food, don't you?"

"I? Yes, of course. Doesn't everybody?"

"But you Macallisters—you have a trick of cataloging small, familiar details with such an infinite zest. You must love life, all of you."

"We have the vitality for it, I suppose. Enthusiasms are mostly a result of pure physical energy. You have an abundant margin of vigor and intensity and you can use it for zest."

"Apply that to teaching, do you?"

"Well, take the modern proverb." Janey threw it at him a little bitterly. After all he was like the Macallisters and their attitude, conveniently epitomized in a Shavian aphorism, leered at her from behind Campbell's question. "He who can, does; he who cannot, teaches."

"But you teach?"

"Yes. The saving grace of it in Fairfield is that I could stop at any moment. Everybody knows that my father could support me in idle domesticity. It's looked on as a personal aberration."

"I see." Meeting her eyes, he laughed outright. "If there's anywhere on earth where that idea prevails it's in the Mississippi Valley. Why do you?"

Janey considered that, her head on one side. At last she said confidentially.

"Bridge."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Bridge. School-teaching takes only about six hours a day, five days a week, nine months a year. And bridge—playing it as one does when the habit sets in—takes five to eight hours a day, six days a week, twelve months running. I've a fancy that at ninety—we're a long-lived family, Mr. Campbell—I'd rather

look back on an unbroken monotony of examination papers than an unbroken monotony of flipping square bits of painted pasteboard. Idiosyncrasy of mine."

"I see. If you could put it into simple words—"

"I don't know that I can. I think I believe in every human being living, up to the fullest capacity. I think I believe that the decent return for life is a disciplined activity of all one's powers. If you're musical—sing—even if it's only singing in a village chorus such as we have in Fairfield—and whenever the morning comes. If you like humans—teach them or work with 'em, or play with them, anything so you can rub elbows with your kind and all the other kinds there are; if it's books, read—anywhere—trains or fields or after bed-time. If it's sewing, keep a bit on the living-room table, even if it is untidy. Cooking, give dinners for twenty in June. Me"—she spread her hands in a wide, explanatory gesture—"I like 'em all."

"I see." He was packing salt about the ice and did not look up. "Rotten not to use all one's talents, even the little ones. So you teach—"

"Because I can't do anything bigger," Janey said bravely.

Alan did not say "I see" again. He stood up and brushed off his hands.

"All this stuff? It certainly takes a heap—your simple little dinner. What next?"

"Nothing. Absolutely."

"The woman's obstinate," he observed to the walls and the refrigerator. "You've the mayonnaise done—and Martha's finished with the vegetables. Now—will you take to the Road with me when these are done?"

Janey shook the straggling wisps of hair from her forehead, dragging them back with a relentless forearm. But a sudden smile twitched at her lips.

"Say it any other way, and I'd refuse you, I know," she chuckled suddenly. "But you've capitalized it so—Something about it—the Road, as you said it then—sort of puts the spring in old heels, doesn't it? And you know," she told him gravely, "that one of my scholars said a year ago that 'although Miss Macallister was nearing twenty-five, she still had the step of youth.' I can't go far. Perhaps just down to the Powell cottage for roses. 'Licia decided on deep pink roses for the table. Of course it isn't a walk, Mr. Campbell."

"It's another half-hour with you."

There was no more than casual friendliness in the quiet voice. It flashed through Janey's mind that this was the fashion in which men talked to most women, and she found it exhilarating although she felt suddenly an irrepressible gaucherie because no ready reply came to her lips. Stephen Mayo would never have had the careless grace for a tiny compliment implied in such a statement. It meant nothing, of course—

She let him help her over the walk where a stone or two had given way, and strolled across a knoll to the low cottage nestling in a weedy disorder of rank grass and overgrown bushes. Against the sunny stone wall a blackberry branch laid its blue green leaves and delicate flowers. Alan Campbell drew it aside and sat down on the flat doorstep.

"This where Hugh's Marcia lives? It isn't, of course."



But a sudden smile twitched at her lips.

"No. She's next beyond. Her grandmother built this for herself. She said she'd brought up one family and she wasn't called to dabble with the souls of another; so she'd have a house of her own. A high-spirited piece she was."

"Not lavendery or old-lacey, I take it."

"My, yes. But it was a lavender-and-old-lace draping a spine underneath. She had a tart tongue in her head. I'm going to live here myself when I'm old. It's a duck of a house."

"What is it like?"

"We're sitting at the kitchen door—a tiny wisp of a kitchen that leaves a tiny bedroom a corner. Then there's a big bedroom and bath and a sort of living-room-dining-room-hall with a fireplace as big as ours. House for one with a maid. You can see that."

"Or two—" suggested Campbell.

"Even two complicates things. There ought to be a den or something—"

"For two?"

"The Lord gave us separate souls," Janey said soberly. "There are times when you want—loneliness. After all it's man's natural state."

"What," Alan interrupted with an irrelevancy that other circumstances would have made impossible, "did you mean just now about the Road? What does it mean to you?"

"Adventure," Janey answered promptly to his straight gaze. "Does that surprise you?"

She turned and looked toward the Highway, curving beyond the meadows between fresh-plowed fields, whose soil was heavy and black, harsh in its strength.

"It lays enchantment on you," she said half aloud. "Always inviting you into To-morrow." She broke off suddenly. "There's a street here in Fairfield. It stops in a huddly way at the tracks and the lumber yard down by the windmill factory, where the tramps are always sliding around the piles to catch a ride into the city. But that street leads straight to the Mississippi—without a turn. Miles upon miles." Janey took a long breath. "Think of that—without a turn."

"If you were a gypsy girl, now, with a red shawl—"

"Nothing could stop me! Why, now, there are words in the dictionary that make your breath catch—"

"Yes—"

"Almost without your knowing. Out there—somewhere—" She lingered on the syllables, and after a breath, plunged boldly.

"'Out there somewhere, along the sea, a ship is waiting patiently'—listen, 'Her spars are tipped with gold, and o'er her deck the spray is flung,'—'The buoys that rollick in the bay, they nod the way, they nod the way.' And there's that other line—pulling—"

"'For I can hear the whispering lips that fly before the outbound ships.'"

She broke off with an unconscious shiver. "I think I should hate the sea. Did you enjoy the ride yesterday, Mr. Campbell? We think the valley is lovely in summer."

"Don't. Any one can ask me about the valley. Most every one who came inside the house yesterday, did. But you— What other words?"

"I have forgotten."

"Why do you hate the sea?"

"I—don't know."

"Of course, if you are going to shut up—like a clam—I shall take you back. As for me," he added plaintively, "my day would be ruined."

Janey said nothing at all. She stood at the edge of the flat-stone step, pirouetting on one foot and eager, apparently, to return. The man put his fingers gently under her elbow and turned her about.

"One hates to use force," he said silkily, "but—why do you hate the sea?"

"It's—unfriendly."

"It's not."

"Too restless. Too futile—that eternal pounding of waves."

"It does pull you, doesn't it? If once you'd let yourself go—"

"I haven't let myself—go," Janey said in a small, cool voice.

"Puritan," he jeered at her. "Afraid that any impulse that swings you away from self-sacrifice is a snare of the devil. You'd love it—take it in the spring—then there's a peacock blueness all about you, and a strange sail, perhaps, showing like a fine etching on the edge of the sky; take it off-shore, with a light land breeze and white gulls flying over that sea-deep indigo; take it greening-black with white foam here and there and over it a new moon; or with the sun flashing on long breaking ripples and a heavenly monotony of southern seas sweeping over you like a great wave." He looked down to see her slim hands clench and the

knuckles whiten. "Words," he laughed softly. "Your vague words. Wait till you know. Take Hongkong. Just that. A temple-bell chiming. There'd be a moon over a black, shimmering harbor and dark brown and purple shadows everywhere on the water. Ships, you know, outbound merchantmen and schooners, and dhows. You'd never forget. You couldn't. You're one of *us*."

"I think I'll go back now," Janey said quietly, and Campbell laughed.

"Are you afraid to stay?"

It alarmed her a little that this casual acquaintance had probed secret depths of which her own brothers knew nothing; had found a poignant restlessness stifled so firmly that even she was hardly aware what the pull was. She was aware, however, that she could pay it no heed. She met him bravely and with as cool a chuckle as his own.

"Your djinn are false. I'm—a schoolma'am and—Mid-Victorian. Places—Hongkong and such, are just—dots on a map to me. And I'm not good at geography."

"Such pretense. If you could see the color flush up your cheeks—"

"The gypsy motif is obsessing you. I am—"

"You said it once. A schoolma'am and Mid-Victorian. I'll admit it's clever of you—"

"Clever?"

"A clever pose," he said deliberately. "Since behind it you can be anything you want to dream about—gypsy, princess, adventurer, pirate, for all I know. You've done me the courtesy to drop the pose. I hope

—after that—you're not going to be stand-offish and unpleasant."

"Because you pointed out a dot on the map?"

"Because I—"

"Isn't that Hugh?"

It was Hugh with Bobs beside him. They tied the canoe at the bottom of the meadow-rise to a plank wharf that jutted out a dozen feet into the little river and came toward the cottage with three small fish dangling from a twig on Bobs' hand.

"I sh'll cook 'em," he explained, "with some salt, Janey, on a reg'lar campfire—and eat 'em—and go t' a picture show—"

"All that?"

"It's after five," Hugh said. "I thought perhaps eliminating Bobs might make things easier for you."

Janey stood an instant and stared at him. Then she sprang away quickly.

"I'll get you some bacon, dear, and some of Martha's cake. Flax around and get some wood. I want to see a fire when I come back."

It was blazing merrily between two stones on the windless side of the knoll when she carefully lifted her basket over the stone wall. Campbell was squatting on his heels, fanning the fire with his hat, Hugh was fashioning a support of twigs for the fish, and Bobs, awkwardly enough, was making them ready. They were as quiet and hidden down there on the other side of the cottage as if they had been ten miles from a habitation. The grass waved to their knees and beat gently against their shoulders as they sat waiting for

the fish to broil, and with the bacon ready on a forked stick. Janey felt wholly at ease and sniffed happily at the smoke that mingled with the meadow odors. Great canopies of white cloud threw a cooling shadow over the fields and the distant woodland. The heat was dying. Presently Campbell picked up a bit of stone and flung it far off into the rippling water. The movement brought her to a startled attention. She turned to find that he was looking at her with an intent and narrow gaze.

"I'm afraid I shall have to go back to Town late to-night." He said with slow decisiveness. "There's a train?"

"One about ten." Hugh plunged his hand into his coat somewhere and brought out a time-card. "Ten-seven. I'd hoped you'd stay longer."

"I'll come down again if you will ask me. Will you ask me, Miss Jane? Thank you. I've a new—problem to solve. Something came up this afternoon, Hugh. I've an idea it is going to change this summer for me."

They accepted that silently. Even Bobs, absorbed in the browning of his third fish, merely grunted. As for the older Macallisters, the unexpected played too large a part in their own schemes for them to question the new problem of which Campbell had spoken. The mail had come only a few minutes before he had appeared at the kitchen door, Janey remembered; and there were any amount of possibilities in an afternoon's mail. Hugh and Alicia were always leaving suddenly after some unannounced letter. Yet she had a brief sensation of loneliness at the thought of the newcomer

who was drifting away after the first hail. It was quite in the order of things that they might not see him again for years—if the letter were important. Meanwhile, there was only the dinner.

She stopped at the threshold of the dining-room, and circled the table already spread, gleaming with glass and silver. From the sideboard she took the place-cards that Franc had written that morning and laid them out in groups. The Glennards—Arnold Cope—the Vibarts—Alicia— She shifted them. Alicia with Lon Vibart; Frances with Arnold Cope; Mildred with Vollmar. After all, she had her prerogatives. Hadn't they said last night that virtually she was the hostess? Well, then—a guest of honor— She laid the cards down hastily almost as if she were afraid of her own self-confidence, and sped gayly up the back stairs to her own room. Whatever happened there was the dinner, still.

It was twenty minutes of seven when Mildred knocked at Janey's door.

"I just met Mr. Campbell," she said, in her clear, cool voice, "taking a constitutional down in the garden with Hugh. He sent me up with this rose—one of our own. He merely cut it. Did you tell him what you were going to wear or something, Janey?"

"Why, no," Janey turned from her mirror with a tinge of wonderment. "I never said a word. It's very nice of him."

"Very," Mildred assented. "Hardly to be considered too seriously, however. It was no trouble to cut it off." She put the rose down carelessly on Janey's

dressing-table. "However did you happen to turn the place-cards over to Martha, Janey? Such a muddle as they were in."

"Martha?" Janey began and stopped. She was in the closet, feeling after her silk slippers and her voice sounded muffled.

"Not that one expects her to possess any particular tact. Though really you might have thought even Martha would have had the acumen to avoid a fiasco. She'd put Mr. Campbell down at your end of the table with Anne Mayo."

"Yes."

"Fancy. He'd have been decent enough about it, poor dear. He ~~is~~ nice; so really nice that it wouldn't do to take advantage of it. I think it was awfully thoughtful of him to remember you'd been working your poor old head almost off fussing with this dinner."

Janey made no reply; a sudden rush of blood roared to her head; her face flamed.

"He's sorry for me," she thought bitterly. "That's why he stayed around this afternoon. Sorry for me—" With swift hands she ripped off the pink satin slippers and the colored stockings; and feeling about her in the closet she found black pumps and the silken tissue of an ancient dress, white and somewhat limp. She put it on, pushing the gay frock back into the farthest corner of her closet. "I sha'n't wear *you*. That's flat," she said aloud as she rumped its crisp skirt. "And I can pick my own roses out of my garden. Without any one's help—or pity." Kind to her, was he? She hated that smug courtesy; she hated thoughtfulness—

The door flew open and Alicia, gorgeous in her black laces, beckoned her.

"Heavens, Janey," she whispered, indignantly, "haven't you finished yet? Everybody's here. We've been waiting five minutes."

The dinner passed off smoothly. At one end of the long table Mildred held brilliant court; at the other Janey spoke on and on with sheer, tireless force. Alan, a table length away, found his eyes following her face as it turned from Stephen Mayo at her left to Alicia's filler-in, Arnold Cope, who occupied the chair at Janey's right. Afterward he tried to find her and take her away from the groups that lingered in the living-room and porch. But there was no opportunity. Even when Frances sang for them, it was Vollmar who played her accompaniments, not Janey. When the first guests had gone, and Don came to take him to his train, she had disappeared. Turning at the gate, he saw her sauntering along the Road, white with the magic of a windless June night, her face still turned toward Stephen Mayo.

The picture Hugh had drawn for him two nights before came sharply back to him—a quiet room in a quiet house, books and a lamp— Then suddenly he felt the sense of the sea—strong salt air pouring out upon him from wind-swept spaces; translucent mornings, black velvety nights, spangled with stars; rain sweeping the waters like a gray veil. He drew a long breath. There was life and color and movement; set against a dun repose. But could a girl—choose? Especially if she were what they called a Mid-Victorian?

CHAPTER VI

MARCIA POWELL was wont to sit behind the vines that shielded her from the Highway and watch the world go by. Occasionally, for her own amusing, she reached out and dropped a bee into a passing bonnet. She was inevitably the sort who sought amusement and she had learned through suffering to find it in the smallest things. Racked she might be with the pain that gripped her at increasingly frequent intervals, but she had never given up the most insignificant pleasure that she could bring to herself. She faced the differences between herself and the Macallisters pluckily; and she held them as intimates when, left to themselves, they might have drifted away with the usual diffidence of the normal, healthy human for the ill.

The secret of it was that Marcia never seemed really ill. Sometimes, if one looked close, there were little beads of perspiration to be discerned along the bridge of her nose. Sometimes her hand, swinging low beside her chair, would clench tightly. But it took a quick and observing eye even for these signs. Certainly the appurtenances of pain were all concealed. Against the rosy, silken cushions of her chaise-longue, her skin looked delicately smooth with a color as evasive as winter sunshine. Her hands were tapering, exquisite and fragile enough, but with the look of resistance and strength in their slenderness.

The Macallisters sought her out at all hours. They could be found there for a little almost any evening, singing for her in the hour or so before her earlier bedtime. They dropped in for lunch or dinner. They brought whatever work was occupying their day and listened to her read some new book or magazine. They played bridge at her convenient little table, almost any afternoon, near the tea-hour. Sweeping homeward from their morning's riding, they saw the stirring of Marcia's rosy draperies behind her vines and stopped to tie their horses at the gate.

The Macallisters, not to say the horses they bestrode, stormed attention. They rode capably, from Bobs, who galloped a rangy pony, negligently indifferent to tumbles, up to Hugh who was more at ease on the back of a horse than anywhere else. It seemed to Marcia that, as the cavalcade swept down the Highway, they had contrived to gather up all the color of the morning and carry it with them. Her eyes traveled in the other direction where Janey, who had been sitting with her for a half-hour on the way to Fairfield for the day's marketing, trudged through the dust, a dull and drooping little figure, alien, it seemed, among her own. And when the flutter of greetings had died down about her, Marcia reached for her bee.

"Are you painting this summer?" she asked Alicia, "at all? Because if you are, I wish you'd try your 'prentice hand on Janey."

"Janey?"

"Paint her portrait, I mean."

Mildred laughed with a ripple of mockery. "Infinitely more to the point to paint her face," she drawled

softly. "If ever any one *should* resort to rouge—"

"Janey—is rather out of it, isn't she?" Marcia answered softly. "It seems to me I've noticed. Emily Vibart didn't ask her to the dance she's giving for Peggy—"

"Janey hates dancing."

"Does she? I wonder. Sylvia Glennard didn't ask her for the Saturday night dinner this week. Or did she refuse?"

"No," Franc said honestly, "she wasn't asked. Syl had to draw the line somewhere—and really, it's a little difficult. We're paired off as it is. Hugh and you, Don and I, Alicia and Mr. Cope, Mildred and Starr Larkin. It's a little hard—"

"For Janey," Marcia persisted. "She must—wonder why sometimes. Always to have second-hand pleasures handed on because some one has dropped out, like the second-hand roses which come singly into one's hands from other girls' dozens." After a moment she went back to the beginning. "I wish you would paint Janey, Alicia, if you are painting. You've the trick of getting under the skin. That sketch you did of Mrs. Chamberlain in all her magnificent inanity." The Macallisters chuckled. "Wicked of you. Enough to gain her eternal hatred if she *could* have understood—"

"Beside that finished deviltry, Janey will be a good deal like illustrating a primer, 'Licia.'" Mildred threw in. "No?"

"You'd find something more than A-B-C, if you took the trouble. Janey was a lovely child." Hugh sat up suddenly, the new thought striking him.

"She was. By Jove, she was. Hair like hers, and that flush of color always in her cheeks. The sparkle's gone. What is the matter?"

"She had typhoid at sixteen," Marcia told them gently. "You were all away at school and didn't know how ill she was. And then there was that year of hard study making up what she had lost; and your mother's sickness; and then the housekeeping and teaching, with special study summers to make the degree she missed—"

Alicia stretched out a graceful arm and spread her long, skillful fingers.

"The Lord helping," she averred good-humoredly, "I suppose I could make something of it. But one must knead the child into shape first. Get something—color, lines underneath. Something to paint."

Alicia Macallister was not vain. More accurately than most women, she could gauge her own powers and talents. She had a sure self-knowledge, rooted in the lean years when she had struggled patiently to make her achievements larger than her emotions. She knew what she wanted, had known from her teens what sort of living would satisfy her, and she knew just how hard she had had to work to make her dreams come true. At twenty she had wanted a smashing success; wanted it so badly that it had crowded out almost all the other wants she had. Certainly it had crowded out the man who offered her the easy, comfortable life that Fairfield knew and the home he had made ready for her. She had had the audacity to accept loneliness as a salient factor in her existence. She made few friends. She could not afford the time they took. She turned her back on the pleasant profferings of their companion-

ship and locked her door and worked. In time, the absorbed years running out behind her gave to her solitude an aspect of opulent tranquillity. Things, events, touched her lightly. Success brought her an assured poise and a tolerant, mellow selfishness. She had a tiny apartment, curiously informed with her own rich personality, its comforts looked after by her middle-aged, competent maid. She had her clubs, her intellectual contacts with music and books and art, her wide, easy acquaintance among other successful people, ripening like herself into late youth. She craved nothing more. Beyond all things, she hated dabbling in awkward, human messes. It was a distinct relief that Mildred, when she drifted into New York during the past winter, had sought no shelter or sympathy with her sister, had proffered no confidences, had, indeed, met Alicia cleverly, with the air of having seen her somewhere pleasantly before and being willing enough to accept advances. Alicia felt a queer gratitude to Mildred for her skillful handling of her own situation, whatever it was. But the matter of Janey was different. She was not clever, for one thing; could not take the initiative as Mildred had; and for another, she had been presented as a subject for painting. Alicia was honor-bound to make of her what she could to her own ends.

She began to consider Janey. For hours that day and the next she watched her covertly, scrutinizing face and figure from every angle with a pitiless impersonality. The third morning, the results of her analysis led her to Janey, who was on her way about the upper rooms, the morning supply of linens across her arm.

She stopped at the sound of Alicia's ascending voice, remembering that it was Alicia's habit thus to preëempt the floor from a distance. It was a long-range method, undoubtedly effective in a family of conversationalists, since even a Macallister would prick up and wait until some word became distinguishable. Janey stood in one spot as if the sound of that voice approaching had put her under a hypnotic spell.

"Here you are," Alicia announced, rounding the corner of the hall. "I want to talk to you. Can't Martha do the upstairs one morning? Come here." She crossed Janey's room and ran the shades of its three windows up mercilessly. "I want you to look at yourself."

Janey came slowly across the room. Her shoulders sagged as she walked and she winced unconsciously as she bore Alicia's scrutiny. She wondered what could have occasioned the sudden onslaught, wishing that she could have been left in the easy peace of the summer day. In the direct morning light, the mirrored reflection showed her skin sallow and lifeless, her eyes dull with faint violet shadows just beneath. There were sagging lines at the corner of her mouth and her shoulders drooped just a trifle under her plain morning gown.

"Look at you," her frank sister prodded her from behind. "There's no sense in it, either, Janey Macallister. What do you think of yourself, anyway?"

"Well—I—I know I'm a kind of a dowd," she answered with the merest trace of huskiness in her voice. "Of course, I haven't the Macallister looks."

Alicia surveyed her through half-shut eyes.

"Haven't you?" she asked impudently.

"You see," Janey explained after counting a hundred, "there has to be one plain one in a family. And if nobody cares—"

"I should think you'd want 'em to care. You know the men look at you exactly as if you were a nice, straight hitching-post."

A pulse began to hammer in Janey's throat and a flame of anger burned in her cheeks.

"I don't care," she flared. "I'm not the sort of woman who gives a whoop for men."

"You have moments," Alicia told her succinctly, "when you'd sell your soul to have a man mad about you; his eyes following you in spite of every looker-on, because he couldn't help himself. If you're a human woman, you have moments like that. Don't you?" After a little, Janey admitted that and Alicia gave a sigh of satisfaction and dropped into a low chair by the window.

"Of course, I'm not working to make a vampire or anything, Janey," she continued, "but men are a fair test when you come to that. They follow around after the woman who's played up her good points. And every woman owes that much to herself and the good God, even if she's stranded for a lifetime in the desert of Sahara. What are your good points, anyway? Do you know?" And after waiting a reasonable time politely, she shrugged her shoulders and spread her hands. "You see. You don't know."

"Do you?" Janey inquired boldly.

"Know my points or yours?"

Janey looked at the graceful figure, sitting with easy

poise; at the coils of tawny hair; at the vivid mouth and deep, colorful eyes.

"I don't mean yours," she said.

"You've just as many." Alicia observed her coolly as she checked them off on her fingers. "Hair, lustrous and thick and soft; a delicate contour of nose and chin; a wonderful line down the throat and shoulders. Don't be conceited yet, my dear." There was not the slightest doubt that Alicia was enjoying herself hugely. She came and stood behind Janey, facing the mirror. "You've done as badly as possible with your hair—a poor, tasteless arrangement, I call it. It needs a Greek profile to dress your hair at the crown of your head and your profile is *not* one of your points. That funny, hard little knot makes you look deadly efficient; but see—" she touched Janey's face lightly with the tips of her fingers. "It makes your temples too prominent; it coarsens your cheek-bones here; it brings your chin heavily to the fore. You can't stand it, Janey. You're the type to carry a slender, pointed chin. You've left nothing about yourself that's—elusive. You wear these gowns without a thought of line—and line is the one thing you should think about, waking and sleeping, if you must. Your hair and your hands and your skin—they're all points, too—need real grooming. That's the whole matter in a nutshell—grooming. These hollows need plumping; and your shoulders—they're droopy, and your arms hang down all wrong. You don't carry your head properly and you walk abominably. That's about all, I think."

"I suppose you're going to wave a wand or something and make me into a ravishing beauty."

"It's a temptation. One wants to think of playing fairy godmother once in a lifetime. But it wouldn't be good for you if I waved a wand. You wouldn't appreciate what you'd have gained. But I'm going to tell you how. Cold baths every morning and a three-mile walk and an hour before lunch in Don's old gym off the attic. I browsed around up there yesterday, and there's everything we need. I'm going in for it with you. Exercise has always been the alpha of decent looks with me and now that thirty-five is looming up ahead, I'm thinking it's the omega, too. We'll see what six weeks will do for you. Take down your hair."

It was a brisk command. Almost before she knew it, Janey had drawn up a chair before her dressing-table and begun to take the pins slowly from her brown braid. She did it quite without enthusiasm. Truth to tell, Alicia had struck at the heart of a vanity that Janey herself had not known she possessed. She felt quite inept under her sister's determined hands and equally discouraged as to the possibilities about which Alicia was so optimistic. But presently, the long, even strokes of the brush through her hair took on a sensuous pleasantness, soothed her, lightened the load that Alicia had laid upon her spirits. She knew that it was kind of Alicia to fuss; but the challenge to vigorous measures which her sister had thrown down before her in her flat advice, found her more than half unwilling. Grooming took such a lot of time and with a dowdy face like hers—

Alicia had worked in silence, brushing Janey's hair until it sprang up and followed the brush for the life

she roused in it. Now, with a skillful, swift turn of her wrists, she tossed a coil across the top of Janey's head, held it softly, stuck in a few pins.

"Look," she said.

Where, a moment before, there had been a reflection of a thin girl with a rounded, prominent jaw-line, a slender, heart-shaped face looked out at Janey. Under the soft masses of hair the wide cheekbones merely accented the delicate, pointed chin; the eyes looked deeper, more darkly set; and the hair itself had changed miraculously from a nondescript brown coil into a gleaming silkiness, bronzy threads showing here and there where the sunlight touched it.

"That's the most I can do. The rest is up to you, Janey—all of it. If you had a bit of sparkle," she added discontentedly. "Haven't you anything pink, Jane? Those dead blues you wear are as spinsterish as your hats. Haven't you?"

The pink gown, crushed into the corner of her closet, flashed across Janey's thought. She had grown to think of it with distaste. It had been an extravagance at best; at worst, the emblem of small humiliations that had stung inexplicably. Mrs. Whitby's comments that morning when the Macallisters were on their way home, her own high, foolish eagerness, the first rebuff and the dinner party when she had thrust it definitely away from her and worn the ancient white instead; the invitations that came for the Macallisters which she did not share. Invitations—and she did not share them. She had no intention of telling Alicia about that pink gown. But she had hesitated the fraction of a second

too long. With a swift movement Alicia had burrowed into Janey's closet, her voice coming back from its depths.

"Heavens above, Janey Macallister! Making yourself into a middle-aged maiden with uncertain hopes when you've this bit of youth on a hook. It looks as if it might have been through the war already. Why haven't you—"

"What?"

"Worn it?"

"I—" After a moment she came out flatly with the truth. "I—a girl has to have a—pink hour to wear a dress like that, 'Licia. I realized that after—after I bought it. And for me—the hour hasn't struck for me."

Alicia did not answer. Her lips looked rather tight as she took up the pink gown and hung it deep in the closet. Janey was afraid that she was offended about something.

"I appreciate your taking this trouble," she said primly. "Please don't think I'm ungrateful."

"Hate seeing a good job marred in the finish," Alicia said grimly. She stood a moment on the threshold idly. Directly across the hall Dale Macallister's lovely young face smiled down at her from beneath the soft bridal lace that crowned her masses of dark hair and softened her delicate, pointed face. She looked at the portrait with her familiar passing glance and looked back at Janey with a curious and startled scrutiny. Janey waited, expectant, wondering. The room grew very still. The birds had been singing an hour before, but the morning sun had burned away the mist and

the chorus was ceasing. Except for a tanager, winging about a tall oak tree outside the window, nothing, not even a chewink, could be heard. Waiting, Janey's heartbeat quickened. In all the years that they had been coming back to the home which Dale Macallister had fashioned, not one of her children had spoken of her save in a casual sentence. They avoided answering when others, outside the clan, talked about her. Alicia had never mentioned her mother to Janey; but surely now, standing before that gay, happy face, smiling down at them above her bridal roses, the word might be said; the sign that Alicia for all her sure success had not forgotten. For a moment it seemed as if Dale Macallister were close enough to draw them again within the circle of her arms; but Alicia turned and went past Janey without a word. Only at the top of the stair she turned, her back to the portrait.

"It's not trouble," she said rather more gently than usual. "Perhaps the hour will strike yet, for your pink gown, Janey."

But it meant strenuous days first. Alicia was quite as good as her challenge indicated. Under her swift, penetrating look from across the breakfast table, Janey winced; would have no more foregone the cold bath which Alicia had prescribed than she would have foregone brushing her hair. Yet she cringed at the thought of it, waking to lie and hesitate and dread its coming. Alicia's voice summoning her from the attic stairway for her hour of exercise in the gymnasium was a call which Janey obeyed, although she had learned to think of exercise, according to Alicia's calendar, as a devilish onslaught from which she would emerge panting and

spent, every muscle in her body aching and sore. The fast games of tennis, the three-mile walk, inevitable as sunset, seemed but the final straw upon her misery. Even when it grew easier, she hardly realized it. It all took such time and time went so rapidly with the small details of her days; the continuous necessity of dusting, the eternal interlacing meals; the deluge of guests that came and went through each week-end. She knew that the Macallisters were somehow aware of Alicia's experiment and it made her defiant. She held herself to the torment of regularity and vigorous exercise out of sheer pride. She would do it through the summer, she told herself, getting nowhere, just as she expected. But the moment they were gone she would resign herself to the hitching-post idea and be done with it. And the sooner the better.

CHAPTER VII

SEVENTY-FIVE years ago the masons who were building the Macallister house meticulously matched it with a wall. Six feet of gray fieldstone it was, enclosing a wide, shallow yard and contemptuously shutting out the inquisitive roadway at the front and the plebeian kitchen garden at the rear. The result was a curiously inverted L-shaped space running long toward the front of the house and turning sharply at the north wall to end in an abrupt, narrow angle where the wall joined its masonry with that of a high stone chimney.

Thirty-eight years ago, when the Macallisters took possession, they metamorphosed the neglected yard into a riotous garden and contrived, cannily, to use the gray wall as a background for its flowering. Along the wide spaces they planted rose and lilac, bridal-wreath and flowering currant. In the sunny corners were hollyhocks and asters; iris and yellow day lilies in the shady nooks; and in that sunlit angle between the wall and the chimney they set a wide marble bench such as they had found in Italy on their wedding journey, its carved ends, yellowed with time and wind and rain, serving as an ivory background for the iris and flaming salvia that ran wildly along the wall in that particular nook. It was in this walled garden by the side of the road that Dale Macallister brought up her children.

Out of it each, unknowing, carried into the world something that was wholly his own. To Hugh anywhere on earth the sight of a gray wall with the sun shining on it, would bring him an instant memory of his mother's happy face bending above the babies that swarmed over her knees and crept into her arms. Mildred's handsome living-room was built up on the shades of iris. Alicia's first successful picture was only a flame of hollyhocks in the corner of a rough stone wall. In Don's library there was a shelf of shabby books that seemed to him alone still faintly scented with the odor of the sunwarmed earth, such as had been all about him as he lay prone on the soft turf and burrowed deep into their pages for the first time. But of them all, it was Janey who stayed in the garden and kept it perfect.

Usually she slipped down to dig in the long beds that ran along the wall very early in the morning before the others, city-bred, were awake. Sometimes she sang, nameless words to a nameless tune. And on rare mornings her song took form and soared clear and sweet and true above the confines of the wall itself.

Once, late in June, a man who was lounging in the doorway of the cottage just beyond the wall, heard a certain blithe melody tossed into the air. And he shook himself upright to listen. The words of the song were these:

"Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea.

Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon and blow,
Blow him again to me
While my little one, while my pretty one sleeps."

For a breath after the last note died away, he stood very still. He had a flashing memory of the Macallister's white-paneled living-room and the Macallister's colorful grouping about the great piano, Janey in the center, her hands running above the keys and Bobs' sleepy head nestling against her shoulder.

"Come from the dying moon and blow,
Blow him again to me—"

crooned the voice.

Noiselessly he tiptoed to the exact spot behind which the voice soared, ran back a half-dozen steps and leaped upon the wall to gaze down into Janey Macallister's upturned, astonished face. She was sitting on the dew-wet grass, one foot tucked under her, and her hands were brown with earth mold.

"Where did you come from, Alan Campbell?" she inquired between surprise and severity.

"I thought I knew that voice. I thought I could not be mistaken," he said with profound satisfaction. "I am glad my thoughts proved so correct. It seems a long time since I saw you."

"Ten days," Janey responded with automatic accuracy, as she plunged her hands beneath the loose soil. "And I don't quite understand why you should be seeing me now. You were going to stay in Chicago another week, weren't you?"

"I came out on the Owl—late last night."

"But where did you stay? And what are you doing on the Powell's side of the wall?"

"If," he retorted sternly, "you read the papers as a progressive woman should, you would have seen an advertisement for a Jap-of-all-work two nights ago. It was fourth from the bottom in the second column and it was signed with my full name. He came to hand yesterday afternoon and I brought him down at once to my domain."

Janey sat back and surveyed him contemplatively.

"Do you mean to tell me you've rented the Powell cottage?"

"Dear lady, I've bought it. It is mine. For fifteen years, now, I have cherished an ambition to own a house; a stone house of not over four rooms and an attic, with a big fireplace and a crabapple tree at the doorstep. I found something like it once in Rekjavik, but there was no tree. And the one in Tahiti that took my fancy was not of stone and it had no fireplace. So—you see. And behold, I come back into mine own land and here is my very dream come true—of that house. I am your neighbor for life, I am. I and my fireplace and my crabapple tree-at-the-doorstep."

"I am very glad," she assured him heartily. She made no epigram about it as Alicia would have done, Alan noticed. "All of us will be, from Father down to Bobs. Perhaps you'll find Bobs a nuisance. He begins living so early in the morning."

"You, too." He moved along the wall as she began to dig in a new place. "I should call this beginning

to live early in the morning. What time is it anyway? Six or thereabouts?"

"Thereabouts. But I've such a lot to do. When you've a family reunion and the family reunites from all the corners of the earth with their own peculiar ways picked up hither and yon—" she sat back and held up slim fingers at him, one by one. "Hugh likes breakfast very early. 'Licia likes it very late. Dred wants chocolate and rolls only. 'Licia wants coffee with boiled milk and toast. Don and Franc want berries and eggs with their toast. Father and Bobs want a meal beginning with fruit and cereal and toast and marmalade and ham and eggs and waffles and anything else that comes handy. So you see—"

"Too much for you—"

"Nonsense. Martha doesn't let me do one thing. I only plan and reach the table in time to see to the coffee. But breakfast being a movable feast makes seven to eight a busy period. So I'm apt to miss the gardening, unless I'm down earlier than that. You haven't told me yet what perched you on the top of my garden wall, Mr. Campbell."

"Just—the lilt of a song."

"A song?"

"An old thing. Didn't you know you were singing?"

"You know I always do that when I'm thinking. It's a horrid habit—waking people up. I hope I didn't wake you."

"I begin living early, too, these days." He looked down at her and smiled at her whimsically. "I've been settling problems—"

Janey smiled back as one who has known problems of her own.

"Seems to me it would have been as easy to walk around into the garden via the front gate."

"I was afraid," he leaned forward to whisper, "that I might meet Alicia."

"You needn't have been. Alicia is never up at six in the morning."

"And I was afraid," he persisted seriously, "that Alicia might talk Feminism or Futurism or something before breakfast."

"You don't care for Feminism before breakfast?"

"Absolutely not. Not but what it's tremendous. Did Hugh tell you about our taking coffee with a Young Turk several years ago and about his insisting that his wife come and sit with us—unveiled? It was like watching the creation of a new soul. One felt that she was determined on progress for all she seemed uncomfortable. There was the Cause— One got the ripple of it even under the suave surface talk. It seems the unsexed revolting creatures were making an issue just then about the right to exercise in the open air. And, you know, watching women take that first—that very first, halting step for a Cause, makes the talk of a big, free creature like Alicia seem—feckless. Me—I'm for bootless chat at six in the morning."

"Bootless. So you climbed the wall to chat with me?"

"I climbed the wall to hear you sing."

Janey's mouth quirked at the corners. She stood up suddenly, her trowel still between her fingers, her

face lifted a little so that her eyes were squarely on his. And she sang him the song of the wanderer.

"Mid pleasures and palaces, though you may roam,
Be it ever so humble there's no place like home.
A charm from the skies—"

Straight through she sang it, and when she was done Alan began to scramble, crab-like, down his own side of the wall.

"I shall be here again to-morrow morning," he announced just before he disappeared altogether. "Shall you?"

When, later in the day, he joined the family circle, he made no mention of the morning's meeting nor by so much as a quizzical glance in her direction betrayed the fact that Janey had been informed of his purchase before the rest. The boyish satisfaction which he took in his own silence and the secret that that omission made of their casual meeting emphasized it as the brilliant thing in the day for Janey. She went to sleep that night, smiling at the prospect of another morning, yet faintly surprised that she should anticipate it at all. When, promptly on the stroke of six, Alan Campbell's head appeared above the wall next morning, she challenged him.

"You've a still Scotch tongue in your head, haven't you? And you're that proud of it." He surveyed her in grieved silence for a moment.

"A reason for my stillness," he said. "My word. Your family is—talkative. Frankly, without wishing to hurt you, I should say it is the *most* talkative tribe in

the known world. Yesterday, consider. We furnished my house right down to the dustpan in colors Alicia thought suitable to my own complex personality. We discussed my future and my finances to the point of embarrassment. My embarrassment—the others apparently being unaware that there was such a thing. Besides my affairs, Byzantine architecture was on the tapis and futurist cretonnes and Creative Evolution and the possible rebuilding of the Cathedral at Rheims and how it should be done, all to be decided before dinner. You were not there at all. You spent the afternoon making lemonade.”

“Of course. They were thirsty.”

“Of course they were thirsty. You’ll find no argument on that. But you miss the point. When you make lemonade, you take only spasmodic dashes into the conversation. The only word you said about my house was ‘Browns?’ It opens up a far vista of discussion. ‘Browns?’ We’ll talk it out some day. In the evening you played accompaniments for Frances—”

“My own idea,” Janey said modestly, as she picked mildewed leaves from an odorous rose-bush, “is that I play accompaniments for Frances unusually well—”

“My dear,” Campbell said earnestly, “your playing is the sort that saves souls and tempers. But—when you play, you do not sing. Frances sings—in her very beautiful concert fashion. You are the background—” He waited for any possible answer, but when there was none—“Out here you,” he went on, “you sing. Out here, please the morning graces, we can talk about anything under the face of heaven—except art. Out here we can relapse into a blessed silence when we

wish. There's more in a decent silence, Janey Macallister, than in any other thing that human beings share. I shall be here on the top of the wall every day."

He was. Morning followed morning while June ran into July and Janey worked around the garden and back again to the corner where she began. It took her longer than usual to make that round. She spent a fair share of every gardening hour on the marble bench in the angle where the iris had already given way to stately lilies with the splash of crumpled, crimson poppies at their feet; where the huge stone chimney lifted its blank walls protectingly either to conversation or to song.

Often enough, it was conversation. They talked with a roving interest on strange, cosy topics rarely mentioned in the Macallister household. *They* went farther afield. But to Alan Campbell, who had spent many years very far afield indeed, the simple things that Janey said gave him a sense of coming home at last. Janey could speak as earnestly as Alicia; she had a touch of Mildred's mockery; an undercurrent of Hugh's whimsical humor fit to ferret a joke from its most obscure retreat. Yet, for all their comradeship, they seemed to Alan to make little headway. He shared almost no other part of the day with Janey. He was oftenest with Mildred—their compact held, intangible as it was—playing bridge on Marcia Powell's porch at tea-time, making one of a gay picnic party arranged with the Vibarts and Glennards, sitting beside her at a formal dinner or dancing with her at the club. Janey seemed never to be about at these times. She rarely sat in at bridge, and never ap-

peared at the picnics or dinners. Saturdays tacitly were given to Stephen Mayo, who came back from his week's work at the University for a game of golf with Janey. The Macallisters gave evidence of having accepted Stephen. They made something of their generosity and joked of it in secret. But it stood.

They did not learn of the early gardening hour. Alan found himself hoping that they never would. It would have spoiled its carefree gladness to have it recognized and made over into a formality. Sometimes Janey sang to him, running through old melodies as a sort of crooning accompaniment to the work that occupied her. Sometimes he helped her dig and they put through an amazing amount of work in total silence. Once when it poured, and Campbell appeared on the wall in mackintosh and rubber boots, Janey looked at him from the window in the upper angle on the stone chimney and presently joined him with a mammoth cotton umbrella that made an excellent shelter over the marble bench. Alan took it home with him and looked forward, after that, to the rainy mornings most of all, since even the slight attention which the garden claimed was missing.

Janey, digging around that garden wall in the fresh summer mornings, gave him a friendliness that was indefinably sweet. There was something of pagan youth about her; a quality of realizing existence and still enjoying it tumultuously. It kept her from being either dull or commonplace. For those who meet life frankly, as she met it, whatever it held, and are neither saddened nor made hopelessly earnest are fewer than a visitor from Mars might suppose. There was warmth

and color and personality about her in those morning hours, a radiance that strangely did not last, that faded once she had crossed the threshold of the house.

Indoors, with the rest, gay, brilliant, bantering, Janey slipped into the chinks like a small, gray ghost, shadowlike in a treadmill of small routine. She was always busy, always, apparently, in the background. It was rather like seeing a grand-opera star disappear into the back row of the chorus. Even when she shared the music that Frances made for them she seemed merely a part of the twilight, having no share in the throbbing sounds. It required effort to recall that it was Janey who was playing. And he would forget, an instant later, and find himself looking about for her for an infinitesimal second before he remembered that she was over there in the dusk, on the piano bench.

Altogether it puzzled him somewhat. He admitted that the thing which prevented might be Janey's unconscious self-deprecation in the presence of her family. It might be Mildred's own finished personality that kept him from quite giving a whole-hearted interest to Janey. He found Mildred very likable, and whatever the admitted possibilities, he was not yet in love with her sister. It was quite in the order of things that he might never be. He was careful to remember that in those early morning hours when the world was still asleep. He had known many women. Because of that he treated them a trifle cautiously. And Mildred, beside Janey, gave him a contrast that restrained any possible eagerness. Finally, there was the possibility that he himself had nothing to do with his failure to make headway. It might be the shadow of

Stephen Mayo, always falling athwart the morning sunshine.

As for Janey, she did not stop to think or question. The mornings were sweet with summer, all the air was fresh and clear and cool and a golden sunlight sifted through the leaves down on a spongy, fragrant sod. She took the gifts of morning happily. One had to. It ended at seven.

CHAPTER VIII

AFTERWARD, during the long hours that followed seven, almost anything could happen. And as the weeks went on, it seemed to Janey that practically everything did.

"Browning named the hour," she admitted to Stephen when she dropped into the library and found him bent near-sightedly over a volume, his knee propped against the casing of a deep window. "Morning's at seven, and it's a fleeting moment at best, when God's in His heaven and all's right in the world."

Mrs. Whitby overheard the last phrases of Janey's remark. She seemed at the moment absorbed in putting Anne through a vicarious quest for something on the Art of the Louvre in Florence—which Anne patiently translated into the Art of Florence in the Louvre, that being Anne's business—but she managed to overhear correctly and deemed the remark exultant and a trifle brash in a girl verging into spinsterhood, with no better prospect than that of life-long Latin declensions. Mrs. Whitby was prominent in the County Federation and maintained a diffused interest in good roads and traveling school libraries, speaking disrespectfully of the days when women's clubs went in for culture rather than good works. But she had no ear for quotations. Everything put into words sounded happily original. And Janey's impetuous

remark simply ruined B. T. Whitby's peaceful evening. Stephen, however, understood the fleeting murmur and nodded a half-humorous assent.

"Everything's difficult," he said cheerfully. "It's surprising, once you've grown, that there's even a moment when morning's perfect. You are looking splendidly, Jane."

"Am I, really? That's good news." But she did not tell him why. She never told any one of those penitential hours with Alicia in the attic. "The Macallister family isn't the difficulty, Stephen. You mustn't think that. We get along better than any one you ever saw. We have the trick of treating each other like fellow-guests in a summer hotel."

He followed her out upon the porch, yielding his book without a quiver of regret; a thing, Anne noted, that he had never done before. There was a deepening interest in his face, and they lingered for a moment or two under the heavy ivy draping the entry-porch.

"They aren't clashing, are they?" Anne observed when he turned back. "I've never seen Janey looking better. I had an idea they would harry the life out of her. I think the Macallisters are perfect snobs."

"They seem to have the trick of living, though," Stephen said with a trace of passing envy. "They get a good deal out of it."

"Don't you?" Anne asked with quick sensitiveness. She adored Stephen. In her own eyes she bounded his existence, encompassing him with her loyal service. She could not resist another question. "Do you think Janey does?"

"I think—I don't know." He said it slowly, almost

painfully. "There's something new about Janey. One can't tell exactly what the change is. She's—wonderful." He looked away from Anne's curiously jealous eyes. She had never thought of Janey as "wonderful." Now her ears caught an echo of new meaning in Stephen's voice. Her thought leaped ahead, traversing in the wink of an eye the full trend of romance. She would stand aside, she told herself bitterly. She would yield place to Janey. It was only right. And Janey herself must be aware how rare would be her place. If Stephen wanted it—for the first time in her life she had seen tenderness on Stephen's face, a hot eagerness in his eyes as they followed a woman's slim, swift-moving figure. She turned to the catalogue that Mrs. Whitby's browsing had left untidy in the midst of the deepest reverie. She was recalled by Stephen's own half-sigh.

"Life up at the Lodge," he said slowly, "seems as—bland as a bowl of rich cream. Money—success—interests everywhere; no wonderment or worry. No trying to please—"

"I'm sure," Anne said resentfully, "they seem to have everything. As much as some others deserve—"

"Bowl of rich cream," Stephen repeated and chuckled. "However—every bowl has its flies skimming over it. And there is always Bobs to be considered."

There was something uncanny in Stephen's putting his finger on Bobs. For however much the elder Macallisters clung to the amenities, there was in Bobs a general hostility toward his elders that cracked through the veneer at a moment's notice. Janey and Hugh, he excepted, save in his bitterest moments, but the rest

he lumped as enemies, even though he thrilled to Franc's singing in a way he himself hardly understood.

The hostility sprang from their divergent views in the matter of dogs. The insult paid Wolf's fragrant memory which resulted in his being taken from his post in the front hall and installed, fiercely rampant, in Bobs' own room, had laid a firm foundation for the house of disgruntlement building daily because of a continuous lack of courtesy with which the Macallisters greeted the miscellaneous assortment of dogs received that summer under the Lodge's hospital roof and ejected therefrom in deference to the flat demands of whichever Macallister failed most conspicuously to distinguish the particular dog's virtues. Departing, each left behind him as footprints on the bitter sands of memory, some rule designed rigidly to bar a like importation.

"We *said* not to feed a dog at table," Alicia observed in innuendo early in the game of wits.

"An' I never," Bobs retorted. "I only—"

"Well—"

"Neb' mind. Didn' Janey say I could take chicken bones in my fingers? An' if a dog's a friend and likes lickin' fingers—"

"Ugh," Alicia said involuntarily, and made her rule. "No dog can come into the dining-room."

"Don't bring a mangy cur like that into the yard again," Don said when the Earl of Warwick had been disposed of with some difficulty. "You let anybody unload any sick, decrepit old thing they have on you, Bobs. You don't have to take every four-footed hobo that shows up, you know."

"You keep your dogs in the barn after this, Bobs," Mildred commanded as the dog catcher departed with King Richard. "Great clumsy thing—and real lace flouncing at that. Why don't you have a cat—or a nice little garter snake?"

"Oh, yes, garter snake, I s'pose," Bobs vouchsafed. He was by no means impervious to sarcasm. He had liked King Richard, who was a bit gambolsome in a heavy, royal way; but he was hardly so dear a friend that he would be mourned permanently, having remained but a day. There was a little rat-terrier for sale four miles out in the country— Three nights later, Alicia roused the household toward midnight.

"Either this Spanish nobleman leaves the house to-morrow morning or I do," she announced at the circle of doors about the upper hall. "Are you awake, Bobs? Of course, if you prefer Don Carlos' yapping—"

Janey sighed as Bobs, drowsy, but still captain of his soul, retired into the sanctum guarded by Wolf and closed the door.

"I'll see to it, to-morrow, 'Licia," she promised. "I'll buy him myself, and get him out of the way." She sighed again as the family separated in more or less hostile silence. She was aware that they found her at fault as well as Bobs. They were at home for the summer, they intimated reasonably. They had not anticipated entertaining a series of impossible dogs.

Bobs sold Don Carlos to Janey without a facial quiver; but he held himself aloof for days. Then there came a Saturday when the weekly quarter extracted from the Judge on the ground of alleged labor, came

into his possession some five minutes before Amy Powell slipped over the low wall at the far end of the kitchen garden. Bobs, lying on his cervical vertebræ, his dusty heels high against the warmed stone, ignored her ostentatiously. He was at an age when, normally, he cared little for girls. But Amy's calm efficiency awed him somewhat as did her unerring selection of whatever male society promised the maximum of excitement and the minimum of risk at the moment when the piper ceased his playing and demanded his due.

Bobs really was the sufferer for the high degree of evolution to which the Macallister strain had risen. "Search for the woman" would have made clear much that was inexplicable to his puzzled and continuously indignant family. But they never dreamed of Amy Powell. She was a very dear little person with a stiffly starched pinafore that emerged from the dustiest barn loft and the grubbiest garden alike, in a state of spotless perfection. She had so great a flair for cleanliness that her grandmother took her aprons off because she grew tired of looking at them. Now, she dropped down beside the recumbent Bobs and waited for a possible eye to roll in her direction. It was a day so deeply summer that the tides of sunlight and soft winds, bird-songs and flower-fragrance flooded the landscape and the human mind drifted as on a sea of dreams. Amy was perhaps more than merely human. At the moment she was bent on action.

"I know a dog—" she said after a moment of futile silence, and left the sentence wavering suggestively in mid air. Bobs made no reply. Amy was excellent as

a scout for dogs; but her interest was of the passionately professional sort that led her to select those in a state of age and decrepitude which required instant attention. Amy had been responsible for the Earl of Warwick.

"I know a dog—" she cooed again, with a soft intonation like a chant.

"Ya-ay?" Bobs grunted. "I know plenty dogs my own self."

Amy laughed at that and her laughter was a provocative thing, faintly derisive, subtly challenging.

"Prob'ly," she observed in a tone of tantalizing pity, "your fam'ly won't let you take your own money and buy another dog."

"They will, too," Bobs retorted in defense of his liberty. "It's my own money, I guess. I betcha I *can* buy a dog, if I wanted a dog—" The wish was too obvious to bring more than a derisive smile to Amy's lips. Bobs pulled a miscellaneous collection of treasures from the patch pocket of his overalls: two pocket-worn chocolates; a twist of red string and a bit of worn leather; some cherished and much-chewed gum; the brass end of a walking stick and a very dirty khaki-colored handkerchief. In the handkerchief, tied in one corner, a neat pile of coins showed, marked by more general and moister grime. Bobs attacked this with his teeth and after a moment of struggle exposed two dimes, a nickel and three battered pennies. Having thus proved his solvency, he took the next step along the path of dalliance.

"What kinda dog do you happen t' know?"

"Collie," Amy said promptly. "Scotch collie—taking care of sheep kind. Mr. Lundeen said he was a val'ble dog."

Bobs regarded her with respect. Mr. Lundeen's cabin nestled in an inaccessible spot between the far end of the cemetery and the quarry where tramps had an inviolable refuge. It was inconceivable that Amy, single-handed, should have ventured near the place.

"Mr. Lundeen's a kinda nervous old man," Amy said sweetly. "Pepileptic, my gramma says. Maybe *you'd* be afraid to go down there after th' dog, Bobs." There was such superiority in her tone that Bobs swaggered.

"Who? Me? I betcha I ain't afraid—"

"I ast him, would he sell him for a quarter," Amy cut in neatly, "this morning when I was down looking him over for you. And Mr. Lundeen says just the Scotch collie part of him is worth a quarter—a full quarter's worth, he says—"

"It's the sect," Bobs reported gloomily. "King Richard wasn't right. Nor the Earl of Warwick. Mostly they ain't. They"—he jerked an aggressive thumb backward toward the house—"fuss such a lot."

"You could babtize him," Amy suggested. "Make him Congregational just as easy, Bobs." Her lovely eyes threatened a mist of tears. "You're going to get him, aren't you?"

It was a card many a woman has played to win—that mist of tears. For answer Bobs rose and swung his feet across the lowest branches of the oak tree and thence with a lithe twist gained the wall and dropped into Alan's yard. Amy, following with greater dignity, met him at the corner of the Highway. They

passed no one save Mrs. Vibart, driving her electric toward the Lodge; and she only glanced at them with a smile for Amy and a slight tightening of the lips for Bobs. Old Lundeen, happily normal, parted with his dog without any touching show of regret. Walking back through the thick, luscious dust, Bobs gave vent to primitive whoops of joy whenever his gaze fell on his new purchase: a Scotch collie—incomparable. Presently he voiced assurance of astonishment on the part of his tribe.

"They won't be suprised when they see a real dog comin'. Oh, no! Not at all."

"Oh, no, not at tall," Amy echoed.

"Oh—no," reiterated Bobs, circling at the end of the dog's tether, the better to observe his points. He seemed to have a good many, and all strangely indecriptive of his person. Barely out of puppydom, he was huge of crest and clumsy of foot, with sad and beautiful eyes, with a white and tawny coat verging unmistakably toward the yellow and tangled with burrs. He limped a little and he smelled intolerably.

"He's a poor, sick doggie," Amy said. "He oughta have a bath."

"They says—'You keep your dogs in the barn—don't you never bring a dog into th' house—'" But Amy was too absorbed in dreamings to give attention.

"We'll play hospital. Give him a bath and some food—chicken broth is good for the sick, 'cause everybody brings my Auntie Marcia chicken broth, and then I'll disinfec' that sore place and bannage his foot, the poor doggie!" She embraced the dog in a fervor of enthusiasm. Weakly Bob objected.

"An' here you belong to th' Ban' of Mercy," Amy reproved him. "You vowed an' swore about dumb beasts. And you can be the ord'rly, like is in all the hospitals my Auntie Marcie ever was at. Ruinin' elevators—"

It sounded enticingly military. Coupled with the merit of obeying the band of mercy to which he had sworn fealty, it was a combination worthy of true martyrdom.

"You ol' scout, you," he said encouragingly, "I know a nice place—"

It *was* a nice place—a northern room, crisply clean after Janey's Saturday efforts, with fresh curtains and a crinkly white spread, guarded against approach by a stuffed Eskimo dog. Within five minutes after they had smuggled the patient up the back stairway, the hospital was in running order, each of its founders occupied pleasantly, Bobs as orderly in a cast-off full-dress coat saved from the days of Don's career at military school, heavily-padded and with a complete equipment of brass buttons; Amy pale and lovely in a white veil of Janey's, ingeniously marked with red chalk. The patient nosing about corners during these necessary preparations had gone to sleep in comfort under the bed.

He was wakened by the sound of running water and dragged forth by resolute hands into the light of day. The orderly, at salute, snapped his fingers and whistled in a whisper from the corner of his mouth. But the dog did not enter the inviting, white-tiled room where the water whispered. He remained near the door in a deprecating attitude as if he feared the worst.

"Here, you," Bobs said sternly. "You want me to come in there after you? You know what's good f'r you, I guess."

The dog quivered and lay down. Amy prodded him speculatively from behind.

"You oughta make him mind right f'um the start, you know. You oughtn't let him get ahead now, Bobs."

The dog rolled his eyes backward, apprehensive of tenderness. The orderly at that moment laid hold on the fluff of yellow hair about his neck and dragged him implacably toward the shower. It had been running a long time and the water, drawn from a deep spring at the foot of the hill, struck the dog like icicle points. But Bobs, sensitive to his duty, scrubbed valiantly, and made lavish use of the big towels hung with Janey's thoughtfulness about the room. It was five minutes or more before the dog, taking advantage of a slight relaxation in Bobs' clutch, pawed his way loose and dashed with despairing recklessness toward the bed, where he lay shuddering.

"Shall I operate now?" Amy asked happily. "Poor doggie."

The poor doggie may have understood that torment was not over. As Bobs approached to turn back the covers of the now ruined bed, the puppy went haggard and squirmed beyond his reach, falling into the narrow space between the bed and the light-papered wall; then, wriggling free, stood not upon the order of his going, but went away from there. He was a trifle bewildered. The halls and bedrooms represented so many blind alleys into which he dashed and whirled

about before he could find a means of egress. He left traces everywhere; on Janey's bed; on a clean pile of shirts spread out for Hugh; on the delicate lavender rugs in Alicia's room. Yet he dashed on, destruction in his wake, the overwhelming fear of cleanliness in his heart. For his bathing, though enthusiastic, had not been so thorough as a meticulous person might have wished.

Into the hall he went, and down the stairs. The dining-room door on the latch the dog butted into it with his head, leaving a smear of wet across the glass, both children anxiously grasping at his slippery coat. From the stairway door they watched him across the sunlit space, shake himself free of the irritating soapy water against the window seat and go on into the hall.

Yet even Amy and Bobs did not imagine quite the worst.

Mrs. Vibart's hat lay on a step of the stairway, carelessly flung down as she came through the door; a chic affair with an exquisite spray of osprey tilting up from the brim. The dog, pausing before it, regarded it with keen dislike. And undeniably the hat presented a perky, impudent front. With a low growl he plunged upon it, securing it firmly in his teeth, shaking it violently, pawing the brim—"

The children, waiting in the hall, back of the dining-room, heard the scrape of chairs and the sound of a table pushed aside. There was a horror-stricken chorus of voices and then Alicia's alone, in summons, shaken but penetrating.

Amy opened the door from the back hall into the yard.

"I—guess I better—g-go," she whispered. "My Auntie Marcia wants me to take her ridin' or sump'n."

"Robin." He wondered what catastrophe was great enough to put that shivering anger in Alicia's rich voice. Aware that he was quite alone, he retreated into the corner behind the closed door and waited in frozen apprehension for the cataclysm of her wrath to overwhelm him. The next moment he heard the burr of Mrs. Vibart's motor. Alicia, he made certain, had turned back with her guest. And it was at that moment when he had every opportunity for clean escape that Bobs' curiosity as to what the dog *had* done overcame his discretion. He stepped into the dining-room, sensed that Alicia had not followed Mrs. Vibart to the door and backed up against the wall, an inscrutable expression on his face. Alicia seemed to have lost the calm poise for which she was famed. She regarded him through a dead silence, little tight, white lines about the corners of her mouth.

"Over and over," she said when she could speak, "you've been warned about your curs. Not to bring home a mangy, unthrifty pup—not to bring them into the house—not to let them interrupt or do damage—You've been told. You understand. I'm going to have this dog killed—KILLED. You understand? As for you—you'll be punished—somehow. I'll see you're punished."

Bobs had nothing to say to that. He had become, before her implacable anger, horribly afraid. He hung his head and raked the floor with the side of his shoe, looking both miserable and ridiculous in the heavy-shouldered, military coat, with its be-buttoned tails.

Still he *was* curious as to what the dog had done, where he had gone. There was no sign of him where Bobs could see; and the house was very still.

He mounted the stairs wearily, once Alicia removed her baleful eyes from his face. He had been able to make no explanation. He could hardly involve Amy with her remarkable penchant for hospitals. Moreover, her abrupt leave-taking argued that she had no wish to be involved. He was alone, and friendless. There was nobody cared. Janey, the only member of the family who might possess a glimmer of reason, was away—tramping three miles somewhere. If his Father reached home before Janey—

Mingled with his cold fear was a growing resentment. He crossed the wide upper hall to the low-silled window at the head of the stairs that gave out upon the roof of the living-porch. It was a precarious refuge, since safety could be secured only by lying flat in the angle between the roof and the upper wall of the house, but it had the advantage of being sheltered by the somewhat buggy branches of a great oak, standing close to the house, and it was possible by giving close attention to make out what was said on the porch below. Bobs had a faint vision of remaining in this retreat until the town was roused to search for his dead body in the river, and he could be assured of a tearful welcome from his frantic and repentant family. He slipped off his shoes, cautiously removed the screen, and crept out, crooking his elbow over the ridge of the roof. Hugh was saying—

“—chance to explain.” There was a sulphuric pause.

"I could hardly expect you to understand," Alicia answered coldly. "He ought to be at military school, right now. Somewhere."

"I'll bet he doesn't even know what the pup did." There was an inarticulate reply and Hugh again on its heels. "Perhaps. But the point I'm making is that you've no right to take the initiative. The authority belongs—"

"You are making a great deal," Alicia broke in with a disagreeable laugh, "of the purely imaginative—Authority."

There was another dead silence. It might seem that the Macallisters had forgotten the impersonal as completely as the most provincial of families. There was an unmistakable clash; almost a quarrel. Silence was the only possible refuge. It proceeded until suddenly, Janey's gay voice—

"Is there a dog around here?" It was like flint to steel.

"A dog," Mildred drawled amusedly. "The woman's asking for a dog. Look in the telephone closet, dear Sister-Anne-on-the-housetop. I trust the instrument is not yet wholly wrecked."

After a moment a rich Irish yell; the dog-catcher, already familiar with Macallister problems.

"Come ahn now. Come ahn, fr'm there. Ye will be after th' sheep o' th' Highway. 'Tis Lundeen's, ma'am. And a spalpeen. The fahrners ahr up in their ahrms abaht it. Come ahn—"

In the midst of that impenetrable silence on the part of Alicia and Hugh he lifted the dog into his wagon and snapped his whip. Bobs heard the vehicle creaking

slowly down the drive, heard the puppy barking. He had a premonition that Alicia's threat was coming true; a sinking remembrance that his quarter had gone the way of spendthrift's riches. He lay very still, listening. Some one had crossed the hall into the disheveled bathroom. He heard a sharp exclamation, the sound of running water, sloshing. He experienced the suspense of a criminal awaiting a sentence that looms before him monstrous because quite unknown. After a long time he heard some one speak on the porch below. It was Janey, saying something strange.

"Babylon, ruined, is my greatest comfort."

"Babylon?"

"When you can go out and find Babylon," she went on, "you've had one of the great adventures of life."

"Janey!" That was Frances roused before the others. "Whatever are you talking about?"

"All its walls broken and its high gates burned with fire." She had begun boldly but now her voice took on a tinge of shyness. Perhaps the rest had stopped their work and their reading and were looking at her. "And yet life must have been very vivid and—and important in Babylon. They—fussed so as the days—wagged along. They wanted woman suffrage and they fussed and talked a lot about that; and people would be extravagant and overdraw their accounts so that the bankers had to protest about it; and they worried about the division lines of their yards; and they had bathrooms. So—presumably—they had boys—and dogs. All the same little human ingredients; little things—that pass. *We* don't care. It's so utterly

gone," she spoke regretfully. "We don't even remember how important those little things were."

"If that's your philosophy," Mildred's clear voice rose, derisively. But Bobs did not wait to listen. He did not understand what Janey meant exactly, but he was aware that in Babylon there was a reprieve for him. He scrambled in over the sill and fastened the screen from the inside. Then he went to searching rapidly and noiselessly through the heavy, shabby books that had been banished to the heavy, shabby cases ranged about the square hall. What he found promised information. He kept looking.

Two hours later Janey brought him up his supper, shorn by the Judge's decree of all but its essential elements; and found him stretched full length asleep upon the floor, among books that lay scattered like votive offerings to the four corners of heaven, his flushed cheek pressed hard against a yellowed and musty page. She stooped down and read, half-smiling.

"—two broad walls, utterly broken—and high gates, burned with fire. And thorns—come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof. From generation to generation, it shall lie waste—an habitation of dragons and a court for owls."

Bobs, too, it seemed, had found the ruined city whose broken walls remain in human memory only to demonstrate that the event will pass. Janey wakened him gently, and left him munching his butterless bread. But as she went down the stairs she found herself humming one of the nursery rhymes to which Dale Macallister had set a tune for her children's singing—

"How many miles to Babylon?
Four score and ten.
Can we be there by candle-light?
Yes, and back again."

And she remembered that it was the lilt of that tune that had sent her to search, like Bobs, for Babylon, the vanished city. Behind the smallest article of Janey's creed of life her mother stood with the buoyant courage that had been her rare gift. It meant going on with a lighter step, always, to think of Mother Macallister. Janey marveled that the others could forget.

CHAPTER IX

IN Babylon, doubtless, could have been found a family the very counterpart of the Macallisters—with the same odd mingling of modernity and traditional convention; with the same divergence of individual points of view; with the same tolerance of everything except the small, inevitable annoyances of life. Looking back to Babylon, Janey could remember that it amounted to little. But through the period of constraint that fell on the Macallisters, the thought gave her only fleeting comfort.

For the greater part of every day she was distinctly uncomfortable. If it had been any of the others, the matter could hardly have loomed so large. But Hugh and Alicia had come nearest to her during the early summer. It was Hugh who had turned the hurt of her birthday into a pageant of pleasure. It was Alicia who had taken trouble to notice her "points" for no reason that Janey could see, except sheer kindness. Now, they had stepped down, jarringly from the heights on which she had seen them, leaving Janey no longer awed but greatly troubled. As boy and girl, they might have flared into a hot quarrel, and forgotten within an hour what they had quarreled about. As man and woman they had not quarreled at all—but they could not forget that fire had been struck. There

was no frank hostility. Their slight bickering was covert and carefully impersonal. They were rather too pointedly courteous, mindful of the minute conventions that can be cheerfully disregarded in wholly comfortable families. Truth to tell, they were as far apart as the poles.

To Hugh, who had rolled casually into every possible danger to be found between the mountains of Alaska and the tangled forests of Borneo, women were among the minor things of life. He judged them by their foibles. Their successes seemed immaterial, their egotisms quite unjustified. He made an exception or two; he was always amused with the finished product represented by Frances and Mildred, with their pretty accomplishments and their surface wit; Janey, commiserating, he grew fond of; and he surrounded Marcia, out of a world of women, with a white light of sheer adoration. But most women, and especially the egotistic woman, such as Alicia admittedly was, he avoided. Her insistences seemed such futile phrases. He granted all she fought for and without a protest, if she wished it. But he was apt to lounge away from argument the moment opportunity presented.

To Alicia, who for ten years had fought hard for her place in the most impersonal city in the world, the upward march of women, shoulder to shoulder, their new awakening courage and will-to-do, was the moving aspect of their century. Hugh's indifference was atavistic, incomprehensible. In his wholly compliant outlook, his surface criticisms, his shafts and allusions, she found food for argument, and if that were denied her, for resentment. She drew away into silence when

he joined her group. Polite they were, but the effort of it was unmistakable.

And it was the effort that Janey resented. The summer was short, at best, and if they were ever to stand together, a clan allied and close through the years to come, it must be these months which drew slack bonds tight. It seemed impossible that they should not find some common ground, all of them. But the constraint between Hugh and Alicia darkened every passing day. At the crux, she went out desperately and bought Bobs a dog.

"Because he ought to have something," she explained tentatively to the two of them, when she had contrived to bring them together. She took the limp bit of dog-flesh from her pocket and exhibited him, wrinkled black nose, mottled back and dun coat. "I've been looking everywhere for a week."

"Ugly as sin, isn't he?" Alicia said cheerfully. She was in excellent humor, an order for a series of illustrations having fallen into her lap with the morning's mail. "We all had dogs; and they never seemed such a lot of bother then."

"Remember that funny-tailed fellow you and Hugh dragged about everywhere?" Janey asked. "Sunday-school and picnics—"

"Ornery pup," Hugh said gruffly. "You cried, the day he broke his leg, 'Licia. This chap, now, has points. See, there. Undershot jaw—get the curve to his legs. Remember how old Bailey had those front legs, and how we worried over them?'"

"Oh, let the child have a dog," Alicia said, as if, after all, the subject had but that moment come up for initial

discussion. "It's really a matter of protection to the family—and if he wants one. Don't you think he ought to have him, Hugh?"

She contrived to give it the grace of an apology. Hugh settled down comfortably beside her on the porch as he had not done in a fortnight and Janey went off in search of Bobs. She felt that she had put through an unprecedented boldness, uncertain as she was of the temper of either her brother or her sister; but there was a new spirit surging through veins where the blood ran joyously. Janey could afford to be bold. She herself was hardly aware of the buoyancy, faithfully as she had held to Alicia's régime; but she knew that there was some inner change. Already, she was subtly sure when it came to meeting the Macallisters on their own ground.

She went up to Town the next day, feeling for the first time that the smoldering fires would not flare in her absence. As she waited for the morning train—the Fairfield taxi had come very early that morning—she caught sight of Don's gray roadster spinning down the hill; in it sat Don and Frances, and as they drew nearer, Janey saw Franc lean forward to speak to her husband. Don slowed at the edge of the curb.

"I didn't know you were going up to Town, Franc," Janey said. "I'd have waited." Neither of them answered. Frances was putting on her gloves, smoothing each finger deliberately. Under her audacious little hat, her face seemed delicate and lovely, with charm in every willful line. There was an unreadable look in her eyes, shadowy under her blue-black hair. She faced Don, a curious curl on her lips. Janey, even in

the slight pause, became aware that they were in the midst of a quarrel.

"You're driving up with me." Don's statement took on the harshness of an order, and Frances smiled contemptively.

"Thanks, no. Not in this dust—with the cost of clothes where they are I'm surprised you'd think of it, Don."

"I'll meet you at the club for lunch."

"I've an engagement." She yawned delicately behind her hand and turned to Janey with a smile. Don leaned back, thrust one hand into his trousers pocket and stared at his wife reflectively. Janey saw his lip twitch and she wondered if he were on the verge of laughter.

"One hardly needs to ask with whom."

"No."

He chuckled mirthlessly and started his engine. The two women stood looking after him as he drove away. He achieved an unusual effect of well-being, his finely-molded head set on shoulders that stooped carelessly; the clean, sensitive line of chin and the full lips and glancing eyes suggested incongruous combinations, pagan and modern. He did not look tired; yet at thirty-one he gave Janey an impression of cynical weariness. She turned, conscious that Franc was surveying her with tightened lips.

"You might have gone with him," she said coolly. "He probably wouldn't have spoken a word to you the whole thirty-five miles. I'm driving down myself, I think, to-night, Janey. Bringing a guest. Do you mind?"

"Of course not—"

"Thanks." She stepped suddenly up on the platform as the incoming train came to a standstill and crossed to meet Sylvia Glennard on the opposite platform with a backward glance of dismissal at Janey. It was quite evident that she did not want to be troubled with the Macallisters that day.

Janey shopped desultorily through the day and lunched quite alone, but an hour before train time she encountered Stephen Mayo unexpectedly and he insisted on taking her to tea in an out-of-the-way place, frequented, he told her, by the musical and theatrical folk who drifted through the city. It proved not so little after all—a long, beautiful room over which flowed incessant waves of talk and laughter and the soft strains of an unseen orchestra. As she settled herself at a corner table, Janey became aware that some one was looking at her—a man two tables away whose eyes, half shut, had stopped at her face. The look was searching, intent, provocative. A little pulse began to beat in Janey's throat.

"Thank you, God," she put up her impulsive prayer. "It's—pleasant. It's exactly the same sensation as having some one insult you because you looked so glad and gay they couldn't help themselves. Only don't let me look as if I knew."

The man turned back to the woman with him and Janey's glance following his saw that it was Frances. She raised her eyes and turned her head, nodding rather soberly, Janey thought, in answer to her smile; but as she rose to go, she stopped beside her.

"We're driving out—Vollmar and I," she said casually. "Would you and Mr. Mayo care to come?"

We'll wait for you." There was the usual delicate arrogance about her, but underneath Janey caught a new excitement. Mrs. Macallister's cheeks were pink and her voice tense. She pushed back her chair and stood up.

"It will be our pleasure," Frances' escort said heavily, and Janey looked at him and smiled. She had heard a great deal of the man who so definitely represented the goal for many singers. He was unusually successful as an impresario. Even to Janey he carried the look of his calling. His clean-cut nose was beginning to be vague in outline, his eyes were a bit pouched, his chin a bit doubled, but he was tall, erect, well-set-up and he bore himself easily and with a certain grace. She would have liked to study him as she had studied many men whose interest lay beyond her in Alicia or Mildred, but for the first time in her life she found that she could not look at a strange man covertly. Eric Vollmar's eyes flashed back to hers with a new glance that made impersonality impossible. And under cover of the humming motor, Frances leaned and touched Janey's hand.

"Janey, listen. I've something to tell you. I've come to a milestone to-day that I've been trying to reach for ages."

"Mr. Vollmar?"

Frances nodded.

"I signed contracts to-day. I feel as if I'd gathered up all the effort of the last seven years and seen it come to its fulfillment—just to-day. It's been such a long, long time coming. Concert tour—thirty cities."

"Franc." Janey gave the hand on her own a quick squeeze. "It is a milestone. Don will be so glad."

There was an instant's silence. Frances looked at her, a small smile dawning at the corners of her mouth.

"You think Don will be glad?" she asked with faint derision. "You really think that?"

"Don't you?"

"Don will be furious," Don's wife said flatly.

"Doesn't he know? Doesn't he know about *your* plans, Franc? Haven't you said anything at all?"

Frances shook her head.

"I'm leaving that to you," she said coolly. "That's what I wanted to say. I told—Eric when we were sitting there, it would have to be you. I saw him studying you."

So that was it. He was speculating just how far she was to be trusted with this mission. After all, it was just a second-hand interest, like the second-hand roses. Janey felt to the full the typical Macallister aversion to personalities.

"Why not tell him yourself," she asked with un-Janeylike curtness, "if it's going to hurt him?"

"I can't argue with Don. If Don ever had had affairs—but he's just one of those unfortunate men who fall in love once and then marry the object. He never will learn—about women. He takes everything for granted. Listen, Janey. Vollmar is ready to help me now. Now. Next month, perhaps, his interest will have waned. *His* affairs, I can tell you, would fill a volume or two. Just now—" she broke off hastily and looked at Janey, her lip caught cornerwise between her teeth. "There's no time to be lost. One hasn't a life-

time to succeed. I'm crowding thirty. I shall soon be old—not really old, but old for opera. It may mean that—with Vollmar helping. I've spent years—so far I'm just a talented amateur whose husband lets her sing in a church choir—and I've a right to success. I've a right to live my life as I choose. There are other things for me besides marriage. This, now. It's worth any sacrifice—”

The phrase struck across Janey's determined aloofness with an odd suggestion of consequences.

“Don would concede that,” she said slowly; “that there are other things beside marriage.”

“For other women,” Frances flung back. “Not for me. I'm his wife. Give Don exactly what he wants and we'd have a country house with a cow and five or six kiddies in no time. The Lodge is his ideal— It's the most preposterous thing.” Janey had no reply for that save a half-averted face, and after a moment Frances went on: “It's the old struggle brought down to a tempest-in-the-teapot stage. Every woman feels it more or less, plunging into the conflict between your own talents and your traditional responsibilities. Of course, the more individualized the woman is, the more tumultuous the conflict. Mildred said that.”

“Did she? It sounded like Alicia.”

“Mildred couldn't stand it. She found marriage unendurable.”

“Do you think Mildred's happy?”

“Why not?”

“It couldn't have been—easy.”

“Easy. The easy thing is to make the blind choice; accept the hoary old precepts about woman's proper

enclosure being the home and all that. It's the Mid-Victorian attitude—"

"Is it?" Janey asked innocently. "I've wondered just what the Mid-Victorian attitude was, Franc."

"One expected it in the last generation. No ambitions, no personal complications. One could sink all one's own talents without considering them. The main issue was the rareness of the beefsteak or Mary's adenoids—"

"I think they came later," Janey suggested.

"You know what I mean. There simply was nothing in life beyond devoting one's entire existence to the comfort of one man and his children. One could have six with no trouble at all. It was that simple."

Janey had a sudden, vivid memory of Mother Macallister, deep-bosomed, with her strong, hospitable arms and her happy, slender face bending above the tawny heads that bobbed against her knee and leaned on her shoulder. She was a musician, brilliant perhaps as Franc promised to become. She was always making up little songs for their singing; she was always playing them mad fantasies—of course, it was not like Franc. Janey came back to Franc with an effort. She was beginning to wonder what internal emotion Frances was trying to master. She was the type who swayed high, swayed low, impulsive and yet possessing a pseudo-intelligence as if her mind followed along after her emotions and recognized them just sufficiently to explain them. She was capable, perhaps, of doing great wrong, since a veiled impulse leading her could be confirmed and elevated by that illogical reasoning. Her moods varied. Now, she was gay, bantering; now, grave and

practical, a fairly good business woman. There were times when she was exalted, swept by the greatness of the music that she loved; there were times when she seemed simple and demure, dropping her arrogance as she might have removed a veil; and there were other, darker times when she grew sulky or depressed, bitter words flashing out as if she stabbed with them. At such times, Don's eyes followed her half-angry, half-bewildered. It was as if a thunderstorm hung between them and must break before clear sky could show again.

"There will always be Mid-Victorians," Frances went on scornfully. "The blind choosers—and cautious. I'm not one of them. I want the freedom to go—as far as I can carry myself. Why, Janey Macallister, the life that's ahead of me—and the success—"

"Vollmar's been making love to her," Janey thought. "He's put the words into her mouth."

"It's worth anything," Frances finished very low. A muscle constricted in Janey's throat. Her breath came quickly.

"You've said that twice now," she said. "Does it mean anything—in particular?"

Frances turned toward her and gave her a long, level look from beneath her half-shut lids.

"It seems quite obvious," she said coolly, "considering how Don's likely to take what I've done to-day."

"You aren't serious, Franc. You can't be. Marriage is—marriage. You can't throw it over that way for a half-baked career. You—"

"You're just like Don." Frances looked amused merely. "Don will theorize with you in a quite up-to-date fashion. But when it comes down to acting he's

Puritanism personified. He looks on marriage as sacrosanct and absolutely permanent—like the Rock of Gibraltar. You can show him marriages that are anything but holy. You can show him marriages that fall to pieces at a touch—like Dred's. You can prove by all reason that marriage is only a social contract at best. He'll admit it all. But he's like you. Marriage—once one accepts the yoke—is marriage. There you are."

"And you?"

"Listen. Life's a big, wonderful thing. It has such infinite possibilities—and marriage is only one. I've thought and thought. It's only that I've finally come to a decision. It's my life—it's been given me to make the most of. Well—valuable as it is, I can't sacrifice it. I can't sacrifice it whatever happens."

"How can you be so sure?" Janey burst out in spite of herself. "How *can* you be so sure it's your life that's so valuable and not Don's? It would take years—he never would get over the ruin of this. Perhaps you've the right to—to hurt him and—make him bitter, if your life is worth it. But how can you be sure?"

There was a long silence after that. Frances gave her a curious stare and then drew back, her face averted and a bitter compression at the corners of her red mouth. Janey felt confused. She was unused to speaking confidently—her chin thrust up as it were; as unused as she was to dealing in subtleties. They had left the city behind them and were slipping along the country roads to the west. The fields on either hand, beyond the hollow of the road's edge, lay in a rain of pale sunshine, their furrows freshly turned and glis-

teining in the warm light. So close that they almost brushed the car as it passed, elm trees lifted lovely branches against an unbroken blue sky. They had crossed the river that flowed past the Macallister Lodge and turned south into the Highway that would take them to its gates, before Frances spoke again.

"I am quite sure," she half-whispered, her hands pressed close together. "I *am* sure. I gave up the apartment this afternoon. I told the agent."

"Burning your bridges," Janey said. "You want to put yourself so far away that you cannot go back." And as if he loomed, a menacing shadow behind Franc, she thought of Vollmar, the indefinable grossness about his mouth, the delicacy of his long, beautiful hands with their gesture of the master. She leaned forward and spoke to him, merely to bring his eyes about. Again they stopped. They did not look past her to Frances. Janey went from pale to scarlet at the look that came into them in answer to her deliberate smile. Vollmar made some remark over his shoulder about the wide, tree-lined streets of Fairfield. Stephen bowed himself out at his own door. Five minutes later they were at home.

In the hall Vollmar spoke to Frances.

"This Miss Macallister? What is she? There is an air about her like a sea-wind. Bracing? Is it not?"

"You think so?" Frances returned with an air of adequate generosity. "Janey is a thoroughly nice girl. We're all very fond of her. Do you think she's pretty?"

Vollmar favored Janey, moving about in the dining-room, with a long stare.

"You can never tell," he said slowly, "whether a woman who has begun to interest you a little is beautiful or not. And it doesn't matter." It was an unpropitious thing to say. Frances' pointed face settled into sulkiness. Yet the meal passed pleasantly at the Macallister table. And for an hour or two before the great man drove back to Town, the Macallisters sat speechless and listened while music poured through all the house. Blended with Vollmar's playing Frances' rich contralto took on depth and poignancy until it flooded the room with throbbing melody. There was no denying either its power or its beauty. Janey listening from her place in a shadowy corner, grew sick with longing. It was impossible not to see Don. He sat in the angle of a deep chair, carelessly, his locked hands hanging between his knees. Janey remembered the look of him on that gay wedding-day of his nearly three years back; his brave young tenderness—

From her upper window she could look out and see Don, walking up and down the garden walk, his cigarette a red pin-point in the darkness. And quite simply she went down and fell into step beside him. It was not until she had by such means committed herself that Janey remembered they were no longer children and that she had nothing whatever to say. She walked with him shyly, anything but the confident young creature who had smiled, deliberately, at Vollmar that afternoon. It was Don himself who began a matter-of-fact sentence.

"Good music we had to-night."

"Perfect," Janey said. "Franc—"

"Franc's voice has quality," her husband declared calmly, "and Vollmar played an accompaniment that was an exquisite thing in itself. There's a real musician lost somewhere in that successful impresario."

"I wonder what happened—"

"Needed money, probably. Some demands that had to be answered. We're all hemmed in by them; financial demands; sentimental demands; animal. One has to fight one's way through and something always goes." He paused to light a fresh cigarette, and the match flaring up showed his face twisted into a hard smile. "One chooses—compromises here and there. By the time you're accommodated to those various demands, it's too late to think even what you've missed. Life does that much for you. It deprives you of your wants."

"But while you have them—" Janey plunged breathlessly. "Franc and I were talking about that this afternoon. Franc—Franc wanted me to tell you. She's signed a contract with Mr. Vollmar for a concert tour. Thirty cities, she said, beginning in October. She wanted me to tell you."

There was a long pause. Don walked slowly to the end of the driveway, turned, started back. At the steps, Janey waited. She had done what Franc asked, and as badly as possible. She could go now. Now—she flung up her chin and took a step or two after him.

"Whyn't she tell me herself?" he asked angrily and crammed his hands deep down into his trousers pocket. "Leavin' the agent to 'phone me—"

"About the flat?"

"It—doesn't matter. Our lease is up the first of August. Whyn't she tell me?"

"Don—Franc thinks this is final. But—if she had been quite certain she would have told you. She isn't—sure. She's too—flamboyantly positive." She waited, but he said nothing and she went on with a shaky laugh. "Something may happen. Some little thing. You've till October."

"Yes." He made an abrupt gesture, shrugging himself snugly into his well-cut coat. His words took on a hard impersonality. "Sometimes I think the early thirties must be the hardest part of life. You're past the eternal fallacies, the self-confidence, and the—optimism of youth. You haven't done the things you were going to do—anywhere near. You haven't reached anything in particular. And you aren't—resigned. You are not resigned. Life—"

Janey stood a moment in the path, slim and erect, her calm eyes meeting his with a steady, unwavering look.

"You can trust Life," she said. "You can hold fast to it—like a friend."

"Do you?" he could not help asking. "Do you hold fast?"

"I keep on trying. Why not? Life is—life. It's a thing to be lived, whatever happens. Not just accepted. Lived."

The Macallisters were still downstairs when she crept through the hall and up the stairs. In the wide hall, where a shaded light through a wavering shadow, she stood irresolutely looking up at the girl above the mantel.

"He's lonely, too, Moth'," she whispered. "And he's afraid. He needs you to—smother the fear. He's

horribly afraid—that Vollmar is going to take away the thing he cares most about in this world. *You* know what the magic is about music and how far you want to follow it. If you could help—” She gripped the edge of the mantel-piece with her fingers and bent her head upon them.

“Dear God,” she prayed suddenly, “he’s very fascinating, even for Franc. He’s become very—fascinating doing things he shouldn’t—probably. It’s rather dangerous for me. It may go pretty hard if—but God, if you just would give me the strength to be captivating and the sense to flirt—because he can’t be the contemplative sort or his eyes would never have stopped. Make me an unscrupulous coquette, For Don’s sake.”

CHAPTER X

It was in the August of that summer that Alicia painted the Portrait. The Macallisters all spoke of it in that impersonal fashion, unconsciously regarding Janey as a lay figure, convenient for Alicia's study. It was a natural enough attitude. Alicia's talent was sufficiently large, in Macallister minds, to overshadow the personality of any of them, and Alicia herself began the Portrait purely on impulse, because the bee which Marcia Powell had deftly stuck into her bonnet six weeks before suddenly went to buzzing unendurably.

She was crossing the lower hall one afternoon and looked up carelessly to see Janey coming down the stairs. She stopped with an inarticulate exclamation that brought Janey to a standstill half-way, and left them staring at each other across the space between them. The girl Alicia saw was as straight as an Indian and moved with a step as swift and light. Where there had been sallow cheeks, the blood showed in living pink through a lucent skin, delicately browned. The violet shadows and sagging lines had disappeared and her eyes seemed darkened under the arched brows that narrowed toward her temples like a bird's wing. Her mouth, warm and darkly red, ran into laughing curves above her white teeth. She seemed taller, stronger, full of vitality and youth. Alicia reached up a beckoning hand and brought Janey down to her.

"I'm going to paint you," she said with startling decision. "Now—I'm going to begin to-day while you're wearing that gown. It's just the color, Janey—and it's that simple your great-grandmother could have worn it in her youth and your great-granddaughter probably will copy it—once it's imperishable. You know that little old love-seat in the corner where—"

"Where Moth' used to—"

Alicia nodded brusquely, cutting her short. "Where there is always sunlight. I'm going to paint you there."

And there she painted her, setting up her own easel beside a north window, but leaving Janey by the wide latticed pane, through which the sunlight poured into the room. She sat in the angle of a quaint love-seat, brocaded in faded gold, a squat, golden cup held in her slim fingers, a faded rug of ivory and rose at her feet, her pointed face showing cameo-like against the warm ivory of the wall behind her with its glimpse of the diamond lattice and golden silk curtain.

Through the long, sunny afternoons, while Janey sat there before Alicia's searching eyes, it became the habit of the Macallisters to drift into the cool, clear space at the farther end and talk until Martha brought in the tea-tray and Janey's pretense with the squat cup became reality. It was a slow and lazy sort of talk, with time between for thoughts to feather out and make trial flights, with time to think or change one's opinions. The Judge, deep in his own easy chair, talked of Fairfield and the Highway that went through it and the great men who had ridden past his door: Seward, Stephen Douglas, Lincoln, the giants of his

youth. Hugh and Alan lounged on the davenport between the windows and talked of hidden trails and strange towns from Cartagena to Vladivostok. Vollmar came, ostensibly to confer with Frances, who was practicing fitfully, and stayed, playing to them sometimes when the talk dropped a little, swaying them with his wonderful mastery of the art that was his trade. But whether he was playing or sitting silent, or talking with the rest, his keen glance was apt to rest nonchalantly on Janey, sitting, aware and demurely provocative in the shaft of sunlight. The Macallisters, themselves, did not notice, so habituated had they become to their first idea of Janey. But Alan Campbell fell into the habit of watching Vollmar's face when he was looking at her, and Frances turned sulky and gave Don a bad half-hour the third time Vollmar asked Janey to drive up the river road and dine with him at a little Inn that rose white-pillared on the crest of a bluff above the brown stream.

Janey herself thrilled to the sense of a new power. She had hardly expected to interest Vollmar. She had had no previous successes. Yet he asked her, quite as a matter of fact, to drive with him; asked her to dine, asked her again. The hours she spent with him were like a post-graduate course in the art of being a woman. She might, in leisure, discount the things Vollmar said to her. But the facts remained that he did say them and that listening, she enjoyed them hugely.

Had she only known it, Janey really flirted very poorly. She lacked the innate sentimentality of your true coquette. She talked nonsense rather than tendernesses—a mockery that had none of Mildred's bitter-

ness. She was apt to interrupt a silence that had grown just long enough to be meaningful with a brisk, irrelevant observation about the book or the poem toward which her thoughts had been straying. She did not even drop her eyelids and accept in silence the tentative beginnings Vollmar made. She chuckled, instead. Once, she put that irrepressible chuckle into words.

"This is such *fun*," she said. "I'm growing less Mid-Victorian every day. Please keep on saying things like that. Do."

To Vollmar, used to elegantes whose cajoleries were purposeful, Janey's naïve and merry coquetry promised no bitterness. Oddly enough, being the man he was, he guarded that very element in their companionship. He came oftener as the weeks went by. Fairfield noticed how often and commented on it excitedly. But the Macallisters did neither.

Yet, during the painting of the Portrait, there is no doubt that they drew the circle that held them a little closer. Partly, it was the long, quiet hours of talk they had together. Partly, it was their mutual pride in the thing that Alicia had done. For the Macallisters liked the Portrait. They conveyed to Alicia, in their veiled fashion, that they thought it very decent. And Don, lunching one day with the art critic on a New York paper, who had shared his own cub days, mentioned Alicia's venture as an incident of the summer, adding that he wished he really had an unprejudiced point of view as to its value.

Corbin took fire at once. The Macallisters as a family interested him. He remembered having met Mrs. Pennell, recalled Hugh as an authority on ancient

bronzes, spoke ardently of Alicia's painting, and, some five minutes afterward, when the conversation had drifted into distant channels, intimated that a glimpse of the picture, if not a formal exhibition, wouldn't be a bad matter.

"Van Doren's in town," he said. "And Crabbe's visiting his wife's people up at Oconomowoc. The portrait couldn't come up here, I suppose? Some dealer ought to have a room—"

It seemed a feasible thing to Don. He picked out an art store where there was a room for exhibition purposes and jotted down the names of an Institute man or two who wore the laurel. But by the time he had mentioned it at home, he found the affair taking on the aspect of a typical Macallister revel.

"Why a stuffy room?" Mildred inquired. "Why not down here? They could motor, I suppose. There's no particular object in making it a big affair. We could have a little dinner for the people who come from Town. Janey would see to that. And I'd manage the rest. The space over where the davenport stands is perfect for a canvas, and it would be fairly simple, I imagine, to arrange the proper lighting. Ask Fairfield en masse for the evening. We ought to do something for Fairfield. Franc could sing— They can't look at Janey's picture all the time and think of things to say. Vollmar, of course—although it's a bit hard to continue asking a man to dinner when you *never* wish to put a handle to his name—"

"I suppose—" Don began.

"I'd like having Van Doren down," Alicia said thoughtfully. "Any portrait is worth about as many

dollars as he sees fit to spend words in his critique. A thousand words, a thousand dollars. He may be a trifle more verbose after a dinner than after a sloppy tea. So—" She spread her hands in her characteristic gesture. "Not that there's any doubt about his verdict," she added calmly.

"You know you are a very wonderful woman," Alan Campbell said to her a little later that afternoon when he and Mildred found her alone in the empty room, finishing some little detail in the background of the Portrait.

"You mean this?" Alicia stood back and looked at her work through narrowed eyes. "I know I've done a mighty good thing. It is Janey, isn't it?"

"It's a most bewildering resemblance," Mildred laughed at his elbow. "But Janey—idealized, don't you think?"

"Oh, blind," Alan said softly; "it is Janey to the very life."

"Yes," Alicia spoke slowly, as if, for once, the exact phrase eluded her. "It was as if the face were there, —no hunting about after the obscure. Perhaps," she smiled at him, "I can do you as well."

"Thanks, no." Alan made her a cool bow. "You can't do me."

"She would probably paint the handsome side," Mildred suggested, "if you'd ask her prettily."

"She couldn't do that. She's the sort who drags the depths in spite of herself. Look! She's made the color of it and the sunlight and that dazzling technique of hers all as—as subsidiary as the pink gown that Janey's wearing. I feel—somehow I feel as

if I were looking in at the window of a woman's soul."

"Are you flattering Alicia? or Janey?"

Alan turned and looked at her intently. "Don't you let her even make a sketch of *you*," he murmured. "You'll find yourself out if you do."

"In a garden," Alicia suggested with a sidelong glance at her sister. "In a dusky garden, where she keeps the beasts, enchanted—but it wouldn't be easy. Nothing has ever been quite so easy as this."

"Nothing, perhaps," Alan said quietly, "has ever been quite so real."

Mildred laughed again. She put a slim hand on his arm with a half-affectionate little pressure.

"Day-dreams," she told him. "Yours and 'Licia's. Janey will never be like that."

"Why?"

"Janey will never be anything except just—Janey. Cool, secluded little soul, her head full of everything except the things that really happen. Fairy-stories—poetry—I think she read it all. She'd chant Shakespeare to her paper dolls. She'd wiggle up to the very top of the old elm down at the end of the garden and sing verses by the hour together, swaying back and forth, her funny little straight pigtails flying—"

"It's there. It's all there—everything she has been and will be."

"Nothing," Mildred said, "that she can ever be. That woman—" she nodded toward the Portrait. "*That* woman's ripened." And she added reflectively, "Imagine Janey."

With a touch of surprise, Alan noticed that his

pulses were hammering. He stared down at the slim pink fingers on his arm.

"Ripened—for happiness?" he suggested.

"Is there any," Mildred asked, quietly derisive, "in this meager world?"

Alan made no reply to that. There are times when silence, by odds, is the better part of valor. He looked across the room at Alicia with a smile of clear friendliness.

"Even in this meager world, there is an occasional hour of triumph. I wish you joy of yours."

But to the astonishment of everybody, it turned out to be Janey's.

Doubtless, it would be impossible for any woman to see herself as a brave-eyed, happy girl without responding in some small degree. The Portrait was there, impossible to avoid; nor did Janey make any attempt to avoid it. She learned a great deal from the familiar yet unfamiliar face. Her chin went up whenever she passed it. Alicia's brush, with its delicate, steady strokes, its limning of subtle gradations of color, had accomplished a wonderful thing. But Alicia's keen insight had brought into life a hidden thing that was more wonderful still.

On the night of the Portrait party, Janey ran down to the dining-room a quarter of an hour before the guests arrived. She was wearing the pink gown and the color of it tinged her mood, a tingling physical exhilaration mingling with sheer excitement. As she circled the long table, touching a place-card here and there, Alan took the steps of the side-porch with a bound and pushed open the door.

"Am I below the salt?" he asked.

At the sound of his voice, he saw her stand for an instant very still and his pulses began their odd hammering again. He looked at the easy carriage of her proud little head with the new pleasure that she awakened in him.

"Ulysses below the salt? Have you *no* sense of values?"

"I've a very strong will," he said soberly. "The wish being father to the necessity. Necessity being mother of invention and knowing no law. You can see how properly my copy-book was planned, Jane Macallister. And besides—" He walked around the table and deliberately carried the card that bore his name to the place between the high-backed chair and the seat made ready for Crabbe's wife. "I have a distinct remembrance of being cheated out of this at my first dinner-party when by rights, as guest of honor, I should have had it."

"Cheated?"

"I called it that. Exigencies of hospitality, probably." He peered shamelessly at the opposite card. "Vollmar at your right? Well. At least the man eats—simply and unobtrusively. This is going to be gay. You might have said *that*," he added aggrievedly, "and made my brashness less obtrusive—"

"I know. It always is the girl's place to mention that every prospect pleases—"

"I don't know that you've helped matters much, considering the obvious finish of that line. However—"

"It seems an imposition to bring you down to this

end when you've no notion what Mrs. Crabbe may be like. And he's a dear."

Alan's answer was irrelevant.

"It's been a long time since morning," he said. "And I'd say that hour between six and seven is the very shortest in the day. Never really time—and there's something you might as well know now, Janey Macallister. It's only a question of time before you know it anyway—"

Whatever it was, however, was lost in the whirl of Frances' entrance. She stood in the doorway, her dark eyes startling under her black hair. There was a drip of scarlet geraniums over the shoulder of her black frock that ended abruptly above slim, gold-stockinged ankles. She looked even younger than Janey, yet there was an exquisite finish about her that imparted a palpable gaucherie to the girl who faced her. Franc's look swept her and turned to Alan.

"You're here, are you? I heard the men talking just as Dred and 'Licia started down. Everything's all right, is it?" She circled the table, glistening in the wide-spaced room. A pool of scarlet geraniums glowed against the white linen; silver and crystal caught the light under scarlet-shaded candles. "Slip through the hall with me, both of you. You've one or two still to meet, Janey. Hurry."

"We're safe," Alan whispered as he held open the door. "Nobody can oust me now. Glad?"

"Glad," Janey echoed, "I was dreadfully awed with that Mr. Corbin. But I shall be just as comfortable with you as I would with—Don."

It did not, somehow, give Alan the exultant thrill

that he had hoped for from her answer. Yet, unexultant though he was, he managed to enjoy himself mightily. The nondescript Mrs. Crabbe turned out, as wives of minor celebrities so often do, to be a very charming person on her own account. She was the daughter of somebody or other in Washington, whom Janey felt that she should be able to place and couldn't. And she had once met Alan at the French Consul's in Calcutta, and greeted him with joy. Altogether, there was an air of neighborliness about the group at Janey's end of the table that made Mildred, sitting between Van Doren and the misplaced Corbin, not only curious but slightly cross. She was not having the occasion she had expected; and logically enough, she blamed Janey.

The living-room was darkened as they moved from the table. Janey, lingering behind the others, had just time to drop down on the little love-seat by the western window, as Don pulled the improvised curtain, hanging before the Portrait at the other end of the room, and flashed on the lights above it. It was, after all, a very simple picture—a shimmer of lovely, sunlighted color, against whose rose-and-gold there showed the slender, youth-filled figure of a girl. Her eyes danced and there was laughter hidden at the corners of her mouth. Yet through all that keen, high-spirited gayety there gleamed an indefinable woman spirit, unfaltering, dauntless, mysteriously expectant. There was the sound of indrawn breathing as the color flowered radiantly upon the dim room, and then a silence that grew long and longer, became painful with portents before the great Van Doren turned and bent his portly person over Alicia's hand.

The things he said were very sweet to hear; rich with praise of the vivid coloring, the breadth and simplicity of treatment, the directness and delicacy of touch. But his hand slipped out of hers and his glance traveled to the far end of the room where Janey sat in the corner of the self-same sofa that Alicia had painted, the shaded light above her finding the bronze flecks in her hair and the warmth in the creamy ivory of her skin. Her hand rested lightly against the dark wood of the sofa's arm, and her face was turned toward Crabbe's wife, who sat easily in a deep chair beside her. Van Doren gave a backward nod toward Alicia and moved, with an unerring directness toward the other end of the room. Corbin followed. And Crabbe. Vollmar, playing for Frances' singing, kept his eyes upon her, and went to her the moment that the music ceased. Apparently they had no difficulty in recognizing the charm that had puzzled Mildred in the original of the Portrait. Certainly, Janey had come a long, long way from the girl whose eyes had filled pitifully with tears when she had slipped her mother's ring on her finger and led the Macallisters to the piano, because she had no words for them. She had words now, and laughter, as if the Spirit of Mirth had touched her that night. Yet in her joyousness there was a grain of fear—the same that lies in every woman's soul since Eve ate the apple and Paradise closed its gates, the fear that for her, joy cannot last, that the inaudible music of happiness will cease suddenly and the lights go out.

It was past ten, and all Fairfield had filled the rooms and stood in puzzled admiration before the Portrait,

when Frances, passing through the hall, came upon Mildred and paused to convey in a veiled way that things were a bit awry. What she said was—

"I thought the coffee might devolve on us. 'Licia's busy, of course; and Janey seems too excited to think—"

"It's been successful—" There was an upward, sardonic inflection in Mildred's voice, and Franc lifted an amused eyebrow.

"There's no doubt about the Portrait—"

"I meant—the party. If only people don't leave *too* early. I never heard Janey laugh like that. Did you?"

"So—much? Perhaps it's a little hysterical. She's nervous and tired."

"No. She's not—tired." Mildred answered dryly. Alicia came through the doorway and joined them. Her eyes were wide with an unwonted excitement and she was smiling a little. From the far end of the room the dragging appeal of a Nocturne crept out to them. Vollmar was playing.

"He said," Frances interrupted, nodding across her shoulder, "he said she had a stillness about her that was like the fragrance of wet lilacs. Vollmar—"

"They'll think in poetry," Mildred said. She swung about on Alicia and spoke with a low vehemence that stayed dully in the older woman's memory. "Look at them—every one. They're paying tribute to—the thing you've painted. You thought you were painting just a portrait, didn't you? For your own glory? And what you've done really is to create a woman; a woman such as Janey herself never dreamed of being—"

I think," she added a moment later, "that maybe you've started something nobody can stop. Listen—"

Mrs. Crabbe's voice, floating out to them as she moved toward the hall, sounded even above Vollmar's music.

"Wonderful Thing," she laughed at Janey, "we'll say you've promised. Christmas Week. And while you decorate my living-room, I shall expect to have all the worth-while artists in New York buzzing about, like flies about a honey-pot—"

"Oh, dear me," Mildred's lips took on a droll twist. "She must be stopped, that woman. She really must. How people do run on, don't they, once they're started?"

She turned and went into the lighted room, skirting the groups of people still lingering before the picture and near the windows. Alicia watched her until she had crossed the length of it and stood beside Janey. Hugh joined her from the porch outside. They stood in the doorway a moment looking down the room to the far end, where the Portrait gleamed under its bar of light. Hugh curled his palm about her elbow and gave it a gentle pressure.

"Proud of you, old girl," he said, most casually. "All of us. Know it, don't you?"

"Thanks," she answered, but she gave him a smile that swept away the last possible fragment of restraint. "Glad you like it."

"Can't judge—Van Doren's doin' the talkin'. He's out walkin' the garden with Dads. From what *he* says, it's a smashin' success. No man could have painted it better."

"No man could have painted it half so well," Alicia answered calmly. "It's because I'm a woman that I—understood."

"The trainin'," he looked down at her with a whimsical lift of his eyebrow, "it takes to see—the common things; arbutus under the snow. And once you asked me for the analogy."

"If only the right man will see—" Alicia said impulsively. "If you pray o' nights, Hugh, get down on your marrow bones and pray God, fasting, that he won't pass it by—"

"Vollmar?" Hugh hazarded stupidly.

"The right man. *One* of us ought to make a success of happiness."

"Happiness?" It was plain he did not catch her meaning. "We're happy enough, aren't we? All of us?"

"Are we?" She gave him a level glance. "You? I? Don? Mildred? Triumphs and successes. We've no occasion to complain, any of us. But happiness. One has to have a gift for it, as one has for music or painting, perhaps. *I* don't pretend to know. Perhaps that, too, is so commonplace a thing that one overlooks its amazingness, like arbutus under the snow."

Mildred swept past them just then, looking at group after group occupied with ices.

"It's Stephen Mayo," she explained, and afterward they remembered that there was a hot red spot in either cheek and that the hand clasping her throat was trembling. "Janey sent me for him. She's in the garden—"

"He's on the porch. Shall I—" Hugh offered. But she intercepted him. "Thanks. I'll find him."

"Things all right?" he asked, exchanging common-places. "What's wrong with you?"

"I? Nothing. 'God's in his heaven—'" She slipped away and Hugh watched her, after she had spoken to Stephen Mayo, make her way toward a group of matrons seated solemnly in a row along the davenport. It struck him as odd, knowing how Mildred avoided the older element in Fairfield and their atmosphere of disapproval. There were black marks against her on their books—her airy nonchalance, her marked lack of information, her mockery, her cigarettes, her absent, often-inquired-after husband. He wondered what her reason was for seeking them out now. He saw her slim hand touch Mrs. Whitby's confidently and her vivid face bend slightly to that lady's ample ear. At the same instant, he saw Mrs. Whitby close her lorgnette, and tap it on the back of a plump hand with a gesture that was full of rich satisfaction. Something was stirring in Hugh's mind. But he was quite indifferent. He was much more concerned with the certainty of Marcia's being still awake and eager for news of Alicia's triumph—and Janey's. He slipped through the back hall and swung over the wall of the kitchen garden, gratified, when he came to the Highway, to see the lights of the Powell cottage shining across the road.

Janey sauntered along the gravel path looking vainly for Stephen Mayo, whom Mildred had said was in the garden. She was quite unconscious of his

approach behind her; did not see him until he had passed the light at the stone gateway and stood beside her. Then she looked up, and for all that she expected him, she started. There elapsed an appreciable moment before either of them spoke. He had swung into step beside her and they were skirting the high garden wall when Janey said simply:

"I was looking for you. I haven't seen you all the evening."

"And I thought," he answered with a new, vibrant note in his voice, "that you were trying to avoid me."

"Did you?" It occurred to her that one had to be careful with Stephen. She had never thought of it before, so easy had been their comradeship. But he had been different for a few weeks past as if an undercurrent of excitement ran through every sentence that he spoke to her. She looked up at his lean face, with the hair thinning a little at the temples and the dark eyes peering at her through his rimmed glasses. "I didn't intend to give you that impression, Stephen."

He followed her about the corner of the wall and sat down beside her on the wide marble seat in the angle. She shivered a little in her thin dress. It seemed absurd to have her fingers grow cold when nothing but the most commonplace words had been exchanged. She was framing something impersonal to say, when he spoke to her suddenly.

"Janey, look at me." She turned slowly, and looked at him; and Stephen gave an excited little laugh and took her hand. "Look at me, dear. You know how it is, Janey."

"Know—"

"You know how it is. You'd never have sent in for me. You know how—much I love you."

At that she stirred and tried to withdraw the hand, but he held it closer.

"No," she said, hardly above a whisper, held tense. "No. What do you mean? Sending—"

"I love you," he cried, ignoring her denial. "I don't know when it began. Nor how. I think it has been a long—time. Since the beginning, Janey. I know it will be—always. We'll have such happiness—quiet happiness. You and Anne and I. Janey—"

She freed her hand with a wrench. Both of them leaped to her cheeks, growing hot beneath their tense pressure. She rose slowly and moved backward, staring at him, with an intense perplexity more and more luminous in her wide eyes. She had rounded the end of the bench and stood against the house wall, her palms flat behind her before the strangeness of that long silence touched him.

"You know what I mean, Janey."

"I—it wouldn't be honest to say I'd never thought. But now it's come—"

"You know I—I'm asking you to marry me?"

"Yes," she said, just audibly.

"Of course, you know. You've known—for long. This friendship of ours, ripening. What is it that's happened?"

"Nothing."

"Love comes like this, dear," he said gently. "Friendship—changing; charged with something that is new. This—this thing that has brought us to each other to-night—it's love."

"Oh, no," said Janey.

"What do you mean? Don't you— Can't you— Can't—"

"Marry you?" she said for him.

"Yes."

She faced him squarely. Her voice was low and troubled, but she kept her eyes on his.

"No. That's it. I—I couldn't, Stephen. Now— now that it's come—"

"You don't love me?"

"I—not like that." Her voice was trembling. She closed her eyes and turned her face away so that she need not see the hurt in his.

"You know there's nothing in this world I wouldn't do for you, Janey. I want you to be—happy. Does that mean anything?"

"Stephen." There was a strange violence in her repressed voice. "I didn't—want this. I'd have gone through fire to prevent it. No one has ever—told me—no man has ever asked me to marry him before. No one. And now— I can't express it. Perhaps, if I were tired—if I had passed through weariness and pain, I'd—come to you. If it meant rest and peace, Stephen. There's no one else I'd turn to. No one. But—" Without knowing what she did, she set her hands against his breast, pushing him back from her a little, not meeting his grave, bewildered eyes.

"But how do you know— That's love, Janey. That's love. You just don't—understand."

"No."

"I didn't. It's come so—gradually. You wouldn't see it. It's natural enough. But I'm going to show

you—teach you, dear.” He came closer and put his arms around her. “This—content and peace. This is love, Janey.”

She shook her head.

“There’s something more. Much more. Not so easy.”

“But what?”

“It’s not a thing to be said, Stephen. I don’t know myself. You’re the best friend I’ve ever had—but I can’t—I can’t.”

A hideous inevitability rang in her voice, even to Stephen’s ears. He said:

“I can’t—believe that. It seems so—simple. If you could see it the way I do, Janey. We’ve been so much—friends—”

“I know,” she mumbled miserably. “I know that’s all over, too.”

“I can’t believe it quite. I’ve been sure so long. *Is* it all over, Janey?”

“I—my dear,” her right hand dropped falteringly and touched his own for an instant, “I think, perhaps, it wasn’t ever begun. I wish—” But even that faint comfort died away in a heavy silence. She wished for nothing more from him than the friendliness that he had given her for years. She knew they were leaving that behind them. Already they had come too far to turn back. She had thought of love as whirling out upon her with all the terror and the splendor of a storm racing across a lake. And yet, pitifully, she did not know. She only knew that she could not marry Stephen—now. The finality of it weighed down all the words unsaid between them.

"But," the man said, half-puzzled, "there's nothing to look forward to. Nothing. It isn't quite—right, to me. Is there no chance? Isn't there something one can hope for, Janey?"

"Please—"

"No hope." He assented dully. "Very well. You've the right to say. But I shall—always, I shall love you. Some day, perhaps, you'll be wanting what—I can give you."

So he went hoping after all, Janey thought; and the thought made the moment that she stood watching his tall, slightly stooped figure lose itself in the shadows, a moment less hard to bear. Yet, for all that surcease from sharp pain, she found the tears in her eyes and raining in a storm down her cheeks. She stood, hands clenched, fighting the sudden tempest of emotion that shook her; but in the end, it overwhelmed her spirit. She sank down, kneeling on the wide bench, her face buried in her arms, pressed hard against the rough, warm wall. The guests were leaving the house. Around the corner of the drive she heard the tinkle of their laughter, the sound of high-pitched women's voices, the hum of their departing motors. More than she wanted anything, she wanted to go back into the atmosphere of gay friendliness that waited for her among them. The wine of genial regard had been the sweetest she had ever sipped; less heady than Vollmar's admiration, immensely more refreshing. She had the shaking fear that she would never taste its like again and she could not let it go. She did not want to cry—even for Stephen. The very tears that beat her down bewildered her. But she could not face the

Macallisters with the traces of them on her face.

So she crept through the hall and up the back stairway to her own room. She did not turn on the light, being unwilling to see her own tear-drenched face after all the high-spirited gayety that the Portrait showed. She answered quietly when Frances called to her, saying that she was going to bed. The moon was pouring in a milk-white flood through the window as she slipped out of the pink dress, and she held it out before her with a shaky laugh, watching the silvery beams shed their sparkle through its shifting color.

"Something devilish about you," she whispered. "Something that drives black care away." She shook it out again and hung it away carefully—no crushing this time—on a hanger fragrant with faint violet.

As she turned to pull down the shade, she saw something move in the deep shadows of the garden and a moment later she knew that it was Alan standing in the angle of the wall. The moon struck full on his upturned face as for a long breathing space he stood motionless, his eyes hidden in blackness under his hat's soft brim. For just that breathing space, Janey waited behind the barrier of her white curtain, her heart pounding oddly against her side. She watched him turn to go toward the gate, his black shadow dancing merrily ahead of him on the white gravel walk. But the next moment he had swung about and with a brisk upward leap had stepped on the marble bench and sat astride the top of the stone wall. He was so close that a whisper would have reached him. In silhouette she could see the clean line of his jaw and the breadth of his shoulders and she became poignantly

aware, as she had never been before, of the man's nearness. But she stood breathlessly still, her hand tight against her pulsing throat. She listened to the sound of a match scraped along the other side of the wall and sniffed at the fragrance of tobacco smoke floating up to her—and smiled to herself in the dark.

"No word," she whispered to herself when he had disappeared. "Not one to throw at a dog." But she did not say it ruefully. She knew that she was as close to happy laughter as she had been to tears. She waited to hear his footfall on the flat stone step of his own house before she stirred from the window. Her hand, held in the moonlight, was trembling.

"Foolish," she admonished it, "it will be such a little while till morning,"

CHAPTER XI

A LONG time afterward Alicia tapped at the door. Janey, struggling with drowsiness had been aware that Alicia's favorite perfume was creeping steamily through the room from the bath that they shared; but she was wide awake as soon as the rectangle of light appeared in the wall beside her and Alicia, wrapped in a smoky-blue peignoir, with her tawny hair in a thick braid over her shoulder, came in and sat down at the foot of the low, four-posted bed.

"Proud of you, Jane," she said in a very counter-part of the tone that Hugh had used. "Carrying off the palm like that for the Macallisters."

"Only one palm," Janey protested, "and you had your hands full."

"I was not in it with you, my dear. And I'm grateful to you for what you brought me of palms. Anything I can do to make it known?"

"It seems a little greedy, 'Licia, but I feel as if the earth would just about gratify my present wants. Success—even in Fairfield—goes to the head, rather, doesn't it?"

"Discreet, aren't you?" Alicia grinned at her in a comradely fashion. "I'm glad I had a chance at you. The other thing—illustrations and covers—are well enough to build on; but one's vogue dies down in time.

Painting—painting the best and the worst that life can do to human faces—it's quite different. I've you to thank for helping up one hill that's to be climbed on the long road."

There was no blemish of envy in Alicia's careless generosity. She was as free from pettiness in her praise as she was in her obliviousness. And she exemplified in the most commonplace relations the ancient saw that nothing succeeds like success.

Janey, somewhat effaced among the other Macallisters, as a daguerreotype grows indistinct in certain lights, was a personality lightly to be considered. Janey, the subject for the Portrait, meeting the inevitable comparison between the possible ideal and the reality capably, was a different personage altogether. Alicia made that quite plain with her first sentence.

"We're going to repeat this performance," she said complacently. "I'm having an exhibit at Christmas—one room for the smaller things and the Portrait by itself. And you. Mr. Blakeslee said the Board would see that you had three weeks. Wouldn't you like it?"

"I'd love it. I—you never asked me before, 'Licia."

"I never planned it before," Alicia answered imperturbably. "Mrs. Crabbe and I have been putting in a gay half-hour planning. Opera and theaters and dinners. She's a list of men already to make sure you won't miss any nice little thing. How does it feel to be the accurate center of a four-ply circle of men, Janey?"

"Well—of course it isn't the first time, you understand," Janey said, and in the light of the half-open door, Alicia saw her red mouth quirk at the corners.

"We have to go before the school-board every year, 'Licia, and tell 'em what lasting benefit has accrued to the classroom from the five dollars allowed by the taxpayers for a day of visiting. One's quite an accurate center there, although," she conceded, "it's not quite the same. I never have worn pink, for one thing."

"We'll revel in pink in New York. Mrs. Crabbe is really quite a valuable person if you are looking for just the right people—nothing of the earnest sadness of Greenwich Village, Janey. Those you'll meet probably would take a chocolate sundae in preference to a Dyskine."

"Only—a hundred things can happen in four months."

"They can. But usually they don't. It's worth planning, anyway. We grew terribly excited trying to find you. Dred said you were in the garden."

"Yes. I was."

"With Stephen Mayo." There was a discernible pause as if Alicia were waiting for a possible confidence. But none came.

"Yes," Janey said.

"They look curiously inadequate for flying," Alicia went on musingly, after a moment. "In the statues one sees. But the whir of Cupid's wings are fairly audible—at the most unexpected moments."

"Flying away perhaps," Janey suggested. "Eros may have decided that the shot was poor and the target too valuable to spoil."

"I'm not talking about Stephen Mayo, if that's what you're thinking."

She made a gesture that placed Stephen outside of

any consideration. With a little shock Janey knew that in her own metaphorical fashion, Alicia was taking her into a confidence. She sat up, like a school-girl, her chin on her knees, looking absurdly young. It seemed that all barriers between them were down. Alicia was turning confidential.

"Who are you talking about?"

"Alan Campbell. Haven't you noticed? It's as plain as the nose on your face."

"I—hadn't."

"It's because you haven't been with the crowd these last few weeks. Myself, I think he's quite palpably mad about Mildred. They've been together the best part of every day—and while he's nice to all of us, it's—different. I don't suppose, with all that wandering of his, he's met many women like Mildred—"

"He—wouldn't."

"No. As for Mildred—"

"There's Dru. What about Drury Pennell?"

"I—wish I knew. One oughtn't to pay by the nose forever for a mistake. And Dred's—paying. Countless ways that one can see. She has her fits of the blues; and she's restless. There's no use staying by a mistake, once one sees it. And marriage with Dru was that. They've been separated nearly a year. She can be free of the whole thing by the New Year. Ready to turn to the future. She ought to—not thirty. And Dred's not the sort to stand loneliness. I'm talking in futures, wholly, you understand."

"Yes."

"I'd just as soon see it through, Janey. I think it would be a mighty good thing."

"For Mildred."

"Well, I was thinking of Alan just then. Alan could go a long way farther and fare worse. She's not the sort who would bore a man after the first flush. Mildred's clever. She'd meet his moods; keep him keen; keep his pace."

"Do you think she cares—"

"Childie—she's never said a word to me. I think—caring is a second consideration. It's very evident from the fiasco with Dru that love isn't everything in marriage with Dred. *They* were in love—mad about each other, if you remember; and they were so bored at the end of two years they—Mildred was too clever for Dru, from the first. I think she knows that if she lifts a finger Alan will come. And when the proper time comes, she'll lift the finger. That's all. It's suitable every way. Alan ought to be in this family. He's a lot like the Macallisters."

Janey did not look up. In a husky, low voice she made a remark so utterly grotesque that at first Alicia thought she had misunderstood.

"We're—frauds," Janey said. "All of us."

"What did you say?" Alicia asked.

Her attitude did not change.

"We think we're superior clay," she explained. "We have a thin little veneer of cultivation—one kind or another—and we're—clever. We think we're not primitive, that we've unusual sensibilities and—original—"

"Well," Alicia prodded her after a pause.

"That's all. It's an educative experience to watch what—how little it means. All our pretensions aren't

worth a picayune. Something happens—little human thing and the veneer crumples all up and blows away." She was talking against time now; against the moment when Alicia should go away and leave her in the dark with the thing to face that was coming closer every passing moment and would not be denied. "Frauds," she said.

"What do you mean, Janey? Don't you think we're sincere?"

"It isn't—sincerity. It's nothing as conscious as that. It's just that we—deny, but we can't—get past the little human things. I was terribly afraid of you at first—all of you. I'm not afraid any more."

"Why should you—"

"I thought you were different. I wasn't educated up to understanding. And you—you've educated me, between you. You who have denied marriage—match-making. Hugh—who thinks he is contemptuous of women coming half way round the world year after year after year because he cares—more than he knows—for Marcia Powell. Don—with his cynical epigrams; and no cynicism in him anywhere. And Dred—"

"And you?"

"Oh—as for me, I'm dribblings of all the rest of you—" Her voice dropped away. She could not talk any more against the new thing that had come up softly upon her. Alicia switched off the light in the bathroom before she answered. Even then she did not pretend to understand what it was that Janey meant.

"Perhaps you are right," she said safely enough.

“‘Night. Dream sweet, dear. The new day’s on its way to you.’”

It had been Dale Macallister’s good night. Janey remembered that no one of them had ever used it; remembered with a little start as if the phrasing were new. It had been the lure to bed, those long nights when life was stretching far ahead and they were greedy of every moment; when there was one more enticing page to be turned; one more delightful stitch to be taken in the pattern that was making; one more exciting game to be played to see who really had the right to win the evening championship; one more hot argument ascending diminuendo up the stairs. And then the familiar sounds of that bed-going, to the incessant accompaniment of running water and their low-voiced singing, snatches of Moth’s own melodies floating from room to room; sounds that subsided slowly—growing infrequent—ceasing. And then—the gay voice flung up to them above the sound of her light feet running down the stairs. “Sweet dreams, dears. The new day’s on its way to you—”

Janey lay, twisted as if in pain, one hand against her side, her cheek pressed hard against her outflung arm. A new day on the way—but a long night to live through before it came. And a wearying night with a restless wind, unstringing to the nerves, whispering through the leaves; a night of small noises—the chirping of crickets, the sawing of innumerable insects, the creaking of frogs in the marshy edges of the river, the solitary hooting of an owl. With her eyes wide to the dark, she thought of Alan’s face as if it were distinct

among the shadows, his narrow eyes now gravely intent, now warmed with the smile that had seemed to encircle her and separate her from all the world. And she knew what she had meant when she told Stephen that love held more than peace.

She held herself to simple honesty. As openly as she recognized why life with Stephen was impossible, she faced the fact that the quivering gladness, waking her hours before the gardening time had held something deeper than mere joy in the morning and a dew-drenched garden; something so close to pain that she had never been quite sure where the dividing line was drawn. And now pain had come. Happiness may waken a woman to her power, but only pain can give her knowledge of herself. The cup that Janey had taken into her hands that night had brimmed with the sweetest triumph; but its lees were bitter with her own ineptitude. She lay in the lassitude of utter defeat. She felt as if she were in something of a daze; as if she had seen a house she had loved and lived in reduced to blackened wood and white ashes by fire.

"Probably it's good for me, God," she said half-aloud. "Being—awake, like this. Even the—hurt—helps me to understand, I guess."

To understand many things, she decided. Unawakened, those morning hours in the garden, had seemed gay, passing moments adding a flavor to her day; and now she knew they held a sweetness and joy that she would remember all her life. Unknowing, she had built a castle of dreams; and now she saw it as a tiny cottage, its stone sunbleached to silvery gray, a gnarled, crab-apple tree at the doorstep. She had watched Alan's

coming as a commonplace in the life of the Lodge, welcoming him simply since he was Hugh's friend. And now she knew that she could never even think of him again without pulses that beat faster, as they had when she had seen him motionless and close on the top of the wall below her window. She had as recompense that new and sharpened comprehension—of Hugh with whom love crossed the widest seas; of Don, defeated daily by a thousand intricacies of sex, yet holding fast to an inborn faith in love itself; of Stephen who knew, as Janey did herself, this keen, awakening pain. Oddly enough, that comforted her. The simple admission that she cared for Alan brought its own peace. Mildred might take—carelessly, mockingly, as Mildred would—the supreme gift. But Janey had more than that.

It was only natural that it should be Mildred. She found herself thinking that. It was as Alicia had said. The rest of them had Alan's unfailing courtesy. She, Janey, had shared those early morning hours when he sat on the wide marble seat and talked—of everything save himself or Janey. But Mildred had much more than that. All day they were together. They played golf, or walked, or made a foursome of bridge with Hugh and Marcia. They dined and danced together at the Vibart's or the Glennard's in a tribal communism of gayety and laughter that Janey never shared. They met in ways of which she had no comprehension. They must meet so: easy where she was shy; witty where she was stupid, an appendage to this brilliant family of wanderers come home, their laurels thick upon them. For undeniably Mildred was clever with the very cle-

erness of Eve. She could play lightly on the surface of a thousand moods, veiling their depth with the sweet charm that she threw about her mockery. She might assume the pose she liked to show to Fairfield: an outlaw, a free-lance winning her way by a magic that was wholly her own. She might jeer at the bonds of matrimony—and she did—but she would know the moment that freedom was hers how to lift that beckoning finger. Alicia had said that. Alicia had said that it would be “suitable.” Janey winced at that in the dark. “Suitable?” Because Mildred was clever enough to make it so? Well, then—the suitable thing for her was quiet friendliness. At best, it seemed savorless. At worst—she told herself a little bitterly as the dawn crept into the room and made it hard and gray—friendship between a man and woman meant ignominious defeat for one.

Janey came to the table that Sunday morning after the rest had finished, heavy-eyed and in a mute mood. Her father was starting off for a day’s visit to Great-Aunt Medora, twenty miles down the river road, and Mildred, adroitly fending an impending invitation for herself—suggested Janey. Mildred had no wish for the inquisitorial tête-à-tête that a twenty-mile drive with her father promised. And Janey was glad enough on her own part to be carried away from the garden and its problems. She stayed on, after her father had left, lingering for days in the huge, dim-windowed house with the loquacious old woman, listening to stories of days so long ago that the very remembrance of them had a faint scent like old potpourri. It soothed her own aching loneliness to hear of other lovers. She

would have been glad to stay on, but Great-Aunt Medora proved methodically a trifle mad. She was past ninety, she explained to Janey, and the Lord had bestowed upon her something that approached wisdom during the last decade. She suggested the city—

“You need a change,” she said shrewdly. “Douglas’ children were a handful—I mind me once you were all sitting in the nursery, clean t’ the bone with your pretty white suits and dresses; and young Dale leaving for a dance. You were having chocolate and sandwiches for being good all day and just the last third of a cupful left or thereabouts and each of you—Hugh giving the word, turned his cup upside down on his next neighbor’s head and left it there to dribble. Nasty—but you had been good all day, Hugh said. And from what I hear you’ve changed no whit. You’ll find the turmoil of the Town restful, Jane. And ’tis no place for a lass, here, with a gabbling old lummakin like me.”

So Janey, avoiding Fairfield, went up to Town on the quest of peace, much as a city dweller might seek fresh fields and, lying on the turf beneath some ancient tree, wait quietly for that sense of good, pulsing life thrown up from the earth beneath.

The quest was the same, but the means were different. Janey turned away from accustomed places and plunged deep into the heart of the city. The streets went past her in a boiling rapid of life. Overhead the elevated clanged by with a continuous rolling like drums. Unfamiliar corners loomed before her, where men and women swarmed like flies and yet where the city took on a measure of warmth and color. She went on aimlessly, passing queer groceries that threw out pun-

gent odors of spices or foreign fruits on the summer air, passing junk shops with faded signs and a stuffy look of battered furniture and defeated mattresses, passing open doors that advertised the western wheat-fields, each with its little knot of hard, stupid-looking men who turned idly to look at her. Street hawkers pushed by her, their carts loaded with vegetables, beets, parsnips, wilted cauliflower, carrots, red radishes, tiny onions. Slatternly women with dingy shawls about their heads and children hanging to their skirts stopped their chaffering and watched her pass. She bought some fruit and cookies and ate her lunch in a dusty square, walled in by tenements, where heavy-eyed children scuffled and rolled on the worn grass and an anæmic boy, with "Aurelius," paper-covered, on the bench beside him, stared at her morosely from beneath the brim of his hat. And gradually the peace she had sought determinedly, unbelievably, crept through her tired mind. She heard the din of the crowded streets coming up like a song. She walked on through block after crowded block, with the sense of the city stretching about her like some old, undecipherable maze. There was exhilaration in her kinship with the crowd. There were other women all about her in factory and shop, in tenement and church and sky-scraper, in every house, on every street-corner, who were experiencing the bitter-sweet of love, wakening, like her, to understanding—

It was Eric Vollmar nodding at her from the curb of a street-crossing who pulled her back into her own world. And she realized how blessedly tired she had become. She gave a sigh as she stepped into the car

beside him—one of those sighs that mark where thought ends—and sank back against the soft cushions. There was a deafening whirring as the engine started, but Janey made no attempt to talk. It was enough to rest heavily against the cushions, surveying the panorama of hurrying vehicles and glaring asphalt where she had trudged and pushed among the crowds.

"Tired?" Vollmar asked.

"Yes," she nodded. "I've walked a long time. It's good to ride."

"Shall I drive you out? Are there any parcels?"

"No—I haven't been shopping. Isn't it too far?"

"Not—" he paused with a significant smile down at her through half-shut lids—"for me."

She smiled at that, with a faint return of the old exhilaration. But she decided against it.

"Too far," she said. "Drive me down along the Lake and take me to the train."

"Dinner somewhere?"

"Nowhere to-night. Just the wind in our faces."

"Blue?" he smiled.

"No. It is just that I've been thinking."

He looked at her curiously.

"I hope," he returned with swift shrewdness, "that it isn't a proposal you're considering."

"A proposal?" Janey echoed, bewildered.

"There's a faint look about the eyes. I can't imagine what else could give a woman just that—look."

"But," she said amusedly, "that isn't it. Even if there were some one I wished to marry, there is no one who wishes to marry me."

"I do," he said slowly.

There was a pause—a long pause.

“You?” Janey said at last. “You.”

“Why not?”

“But why? Do you always propose when the lady has a faint look about the eyes? You know—you don’t by any stretch of possibility love me.”

“Why not?” he asked again. “Why shouldn’t I? You’re attractive, you’re something more than pretty; you’re clever, you’re well-bred—”

“Not clever. Please.”

“You have the things I should look for—you could be everything I want my wife to be. And I can give you the things most women want—money, friends. It’s not so bad. Come, now. Is it?”

It came to her with a catch of the breath that this was temptation. To settle the matter now; to choose; to go back among the Macallisters flaunting the pride of having been chosen by Vollmar; to dull the pain that waited for her there among them all, with the certainty that she had taken an irrevocable step; to plunge into the excitement that shimmers through Fairfield when such news of its own stirs its pool-like quiet; there was a challenging allurements about that prospect. Surely other women made such a choice: life with a congenial man, money, position of its sort and friends—

“But it isn’t love,” Janey said aloud.

“Oh, come,” Vollmar answered impatiently. “At twenty, perhaps, I’d have gone down on my knees—at twenty I dreamed of capturing the world with a storm of music. But twenty’s gone by. I make money through other people’s music now—and enjoy my own. And—”

"Since you have compromised with music you think you can with love. You follow your logic and it takes you, as pure logic always does, to a *reductio ad absurdum*. You don't see any reason why you shouldn't love me—but you don't. You don't love me and you don't want to marry me. Let's not say anything more about it. Shall we?"

"No," he said. "We'll say much more. Tell me why?"

"I've had one proposal before this," Janey said, after a moment with what seemed utter irrelevance. "From a man who thought of—love as a—a sort of Nirvana of uneventfulness. And it made me think about what I thought love was. I think it's a Great Adventure—I love to think of it like that, as if one started out in some golden galleon to sail the farthest seas—A Great Adventure, for which one—waits. You see—it isn't that to you."

"Isn't it?" Vollmar asked. His tone was grim.

Janey sat very still, her hands twisting about each other in her lap. The wind from the Lake struck against her cheek in little gusts, soft with the hint of rain. Gray clouds were scudding across the high blue afternoon. She spoke with sudden intuition.

"Perhaps—once. I should have liked to have known you at twenty. But now—you see, you've come to doubt the power of love. You've come to think of marriage in barbaric terms: as a means of holding best the woman who can best display for you the trophies of your prowess: the jewels and the gowns and furs that you can buy for her."

"You are very young, aren't you?" Vollmar said.

"Most women are barbarians beyond the wildest imaginings. They're greedy for those 'trophies of prowess.' Insatiably greedy."

"There was a woman, then?"

"We were married. Two years." She saw a bitterness settle down on his full lips. After a moment's silence he laughed. It was not a pleasant laugh.

"I'm sorry," Janey said. "But—you see, after all, it proves what I said. You don't love me. You saw me the other night in the light of 'Licia's Portrait, and you decided I'd—do. In a month you'd be sorry. In a year there would be some one else. And I couldn't hold you, because—"

"You don't love me. You wouldn't try—"

"I suppose that would be it. But what I was going to say was that I could never hold you, because I'm not really clever. I wouldn't—know how. I—I suppose you've never thought how—how helpless a girl feels who isn't attractive."

"But you—"

"So much depends on just that—being attractive. The books are so full of women who *are* attractive. And there are women all about—even in a little town—who have the most thrilling times because they are. A girl wonders why sometimes—what there is about her that men—nice men who aren't very clever, never seem to know she's about. You may be very quiet about it—or perky and defiant; but you can't help wondering. Or you can be very busy and forget once in a while that you're failing in what every one expects of a woman; or you can say you don't care. But it leaves you with a helpless ineptitude. You feel that you

are ineffective; that you'd always be when it came to a crisis—"

"Pure rot," Vollmar said succinctly.

"No. Of course, I don't feel exactly as I used to. This summer now—has been a game, a testing of what a girl—unattractive—could do. Alicia pointed out the way at the beginning. But it wasn't a test. I—wanted seasoning. And you seemed—seasoned. I thought I could learn on you."

"It's rather hard on me," Vollmar said.

"I know I ought to say that I'm ashamed. All the time, I thought if you ever did make love to me, I should be terribly ashamed. I was rather hoping you would. Leading you on—"

"You," Vollmar chortled, "leading me on."

"The intention was there," Janey said stiffly. "Probably the performance was amateurish. But I did the best I could. I'm trying to tell you the simple truth, Mr. Vollmar. I wanted to flirt with you, if you would; and as I said, I expected to be terribly ashamed. I think a true Mid-Victorian would. But there's something lacking in me. I'm not—ashamed or sorry. I'd never known I could before and I—liked it. Those little subtle compliments sound so out of the ordinary. I think if most middle-aged, married women could have a little respectable flirtation now and then—even if it wasn't anybody more than their own husband—it would keep their chins up and their vanity sweet-tempered. Of course that isn't Mid-Victorian *at all*."

"No."

"But you understand, don't you? You're not much of a Mid-Victorian yourself. And you liked it, too."

"You know."

The car he was driving swung into the avenue that led to the station. Gradually a smile appeared in his eyes and at the corners of his mouth, a strangely boyish smile.

"I'm beginning to see," he said and drew a breath. "I—will you be friends with me? I've never asked *that* of any woman before. I've never cared for a woman's friendship—but I like honesty." He broke off and laughed. "Here's twenty for you. Plighting friendship—when of all things it's elusive. But will you? Will you, Janey Macallister?"

"I'd like it," she said shyly. "I've never had a friend—any more than you. But it wasn't for the same reason. I think—I really think I should feel better about everything," she finished lucidly. "Even the man at twenty who wanted to storm the world with music."

She could turn her face toward Fairfield with a measure of courage. The day among the crowds of the city streets had dulled the poignancy of her absorption and the plighted friendliness with a man who had offered many women merely love fell like a soothing balm upon her spirit. There was something very real about Vollmar's wish for simple friendliness; as if, under all the material grossness, the boy of twenty still called to one of his kind. Whatever happened there was a pleasant comradeship for days to come, or years. And so long as it lasted Franc's concert tour, thirty cities or sixty cities, held no dangers, no possibilities of tragedy for Don's great adventure. She was quite sure of that. Friendliness alone made it impossible.

She had reached the point where she could trust her-

self to the ordinary round; could take up the existence at the Lodge without betraying the one secret that she knew; could endure with fortitude the dull and empty weeks that stretched before her. There was one thing only that she could not do. She could not go down again to share the blithe morning hour in the garden with Alan Campbell.

CHAPTER XII

BUT there was one thing which, in her self-absorption, Janey overlooked. And that was the temper of one Alan Campbell.

He had waited patiently enough, during the week or more of her absence, sharing her mentally with Great-Aunt Medora. Lingered on the wall, the morning after her return, he excused her non-appearance with the remembrance that she had looked tired the night before. But as the days lengthened into a rounded week, he grew restless. The garden close needed her. He cast a speculative eye about it, each morning from his post on the top of the wall, noting here and there the weeds cropping up; not the lush, rank growth of early summer before which the stateliest flowers may go down to defeat, but weeds, nevertheless, and gratifyingly perceptible. It was not until he found Old Man Lundeen pottering about in the heat of an August forenoon that he gave up hope of seeing Janey with the morning. At that he girded himself for pursuit, swearing to the horror of his Jap-of-all-work that sleep should not rest upon his eyelids until he had had the matter out.

But pursuit proved baffling. She greeted him gayly from her place among the group on the living-porch that morning, and presently disappeared, leaving to Hugh and Alicia and Mildred the brunt of entertaining. When he strolled toward the kitchen just before lunch-

eon, Janey was so busy showing Martha the technique of fudge frosting that she did not even see the interrogative eyebrow he put forth in her direction. Immediately after the meal, she started out on a round of formal calls, so Alicia told him, apparently quite oblivious of the irritation that would follow her up and down the tree-lined streets of the village, Fairfield granting itself the indulgence of a mid-day nap and never appearing in hospitable regalia before three of an afternoon. Alan, cudgeling his brain as the most likely place where a woman would make a formal call, hit upon the Vibart's and missed her altogether, outstaying his welcome to such a point that Mrs. Vibart openly offered to set him down at the Country Club on her way out to finish up the afternoon with bridge. From the club he walked across the bridge to Anne Mayo's and met defeat for his pains; Mrs. Larkin had had her visitation earlier in the afternoon and had no idea of Janey's whereabouts; Mrs. Whitby, too, and Mrs. Wakefield. At Marcia's he found Hugh and Mildred and an appetizing tray, but Janey had gone on. He lingered there, on Mildred's intimation that Janey was really lying down before dinner, and strolled home just in time for his own, marveling at her energy and at the fullness of her days.

To Janey, the day had been endless, one of countless empty days stretching ahead. The kinship with the crowds that had soothed her just at first was gone by now, dissipated by the personalities of her own world. Fairfield had closed in about her again; and Alan was living just over the wall. Yet it was when the dull hours of that day were nearly spent that the Letter

came, poked through the screen door by a special messenger whose injured air revealed resentment at this interruption of his dinner hour. He had brought it, perforce, even Fairfield protesting against the arrangement of having its special delivery letters arrive some two hours after the next morning's mail. But he glowered at Janey for her faultiness.

She read it once in the hall. Then she took it around with her to the garden bench and read it twice more, pausing reflectively over each rounded paragraph. Afterwards, she sat for a long time staring at it and snapping the typewritten sheet, now and then with a thoughtful forefinger; and presently, in that unconscious habit of hers when her thoughts ran deep, she began to sing.

Where are ye goin', my brave gossoon?
Whist, me Lanty Laddie.
Off with the Pixies to find the moon?
Whist, me Lanty Lad.
Hollow, heigho, Lanty Lad,
Whin do ye start, me Lanty?
Hollow, heigho, Lanty Lad,
Pulse of my hear-rt, me Lanty.

The song shot up above the wall. And Alan Campbell, hearing, nearly upset the tiny dinner table at which he was eating in a lonely, bookish fashion in his haste to reach the garden. It was quite useless. He saw the flutter of her skirt as she ran up the step, just at the moment when his head loomed over the top of the wall. She did not see him. She did not even look back over her shoulder. He went back to his chop and his propped-up book, morosely.

"It's a letter from Town," Janey explained in a

breath to the Macallisters, "about a supervisorship in Latin."

"A supervisorship? Do you mean Chicago?"

Janey nodded. The corners of her mouth quirked at the all-too-evident surprise among the family.

"They offer me eighteen hundred the first year," she went on composedly, "and automatic increases—"

"Splendid," Franc cried generously. "You'll go back spring and fall, but in the winter—"

"Better take a flat winters," Alicia cut in neatly. "You could go out on the north shore near Lida Page. You might better begin that way in September and not have to move after your school-work starts. I'll stay and help you settle. Southern exposure and a sleeping porch, but everything compact. Those sliding beds, now, are fair for comfort—Bobs, at least, could be stowed away, so. You can take silver and linen from here and get light wicker stuff mostly for furnishings. We'll use some Morris cretonnes. I'll make a duck of a flat for you—"

"Or you could have a six- or seven-room place and I'll stop with you." Don interrupted the smooth flow of Alicia's plans. "Use our stuff; and Franc can come in between her concert trips. I'll see about an extra Symphony ticket the first thing to-morrow. Two, if Dads cares for it. And look up Joslin about the Saturday Night Club—"

It was Hugh who periodized their enthusiasm in mid-air.

"Have you decided to accept, Janey?"

"I—I don't know," she said half-helplessly. "I wanted to talk about it. I don't know."

"Janey—don't be indecisive. Don't. We'll all of us be so much more contented if you are established with a really good future ahead—"

"And think what it means to Chicago," Mildred drawled.

"You don't need to settle every detail to-night. Although I think I'd call up Winkie to-morrow. You'll need an evening gown—"

"You'd hardly be wise to turn this down," Don added comfortably. "You'll be something, Jane."

Janey said nothing. She slipped over into the wicker swing beside Hugh. Her cheeks were burning in the dusk.

"B-but that's it. You be patient just a minute. It isn't the *teaching*. I like it—b-but what I mean, I guess, is that I'm a small-town teacher. I l-like being taken along as chaperone for the school hops and hayrack-rides. And I—boost Billy Pattison's marks when he's in the grip of his first tremendous love affair. And I help the girls with their dresses and keep them from doing *fool* things with their hair. But a supervisorship—just going into a big city and telling teachers how to—teach—is such a job. It'll take five years to build up my own system; and years more watching it work. I'm Macallister enough to stick around till the job's done. But I expect I shall begin to feel—important pretty soon. And that is so unpleasant."

"Janey! My word, Janey Macallister. Here you've every chance a man has to make a big professional success—and getting a man's pay. You're independent for life—"

"Tremendous living," Alicia came through smoothly.

"Plan your life now. Set your goal and go straight. Say you divide the work into lustrums. By thirty you'll have your system in shape; by thirty-five you'll be getting the maximum; by forty you can have developed side-issues—summer-school work, writing, lecturing. By fifty you can have taken up an executive position. You can walk right up the ladder and be head of the school system, probably, by the time you're sixty."

Janey sighed. Sixty was a long way off; six and a half lustrums, to be exact. She wondered if the upward climb was as alluring as Alicia made it sound. With every round of the ladder—there was Youth farther behind. She thought poignantly of what Youth might seem to a woman who, at forty, had drained her own. Youth that flowered like a wild rose; that sang like a lark, high in the summer heaven; that flashed, all at once, like a star in the twilight. Youth, she told herself, was already leaving her by its own imperceptible pathways. And here was Opportunity knocking its solitary summons at her door.

"You talk as if all you needed was—will," she murmured to hide her thoughts, "poured out like a—juice that would make all the wheels go round."

"Given your experience, Janey," Alicia returned crisply, "and the will to succeed; and eight fair working hours a day, you'll find there's no stopping yourself. Nothing will be too hard; no work too much. It isn't likely you will let circumstances engulf you. Even marriage. That's one thing to be thankful for," she concluded, with a graceful intonation. "We Macallister women aren't the Mid-Victorian domestic sort."

"B-but I think I am," Janey said. "I—I think maybe that's just the trouble."

A little shocked silence weighed down her words. The Judge rumbled something in his throat. He had been raised piously Scotch-Presbyterian and the rumble was "Praise God." But as only Hugh heard, it did not really matter. For purely practical purposes, Alicia was the first to catch her breath.

"But a woman like that *does* for herself. Completely. Even when she can keep up a profession, there's the pull. You now—when you've developed the vocational aptitudes you have—"

"You're not by any chance taking this way of announcing it," Mildred drawled, "that you have done for yourself, Janey?"

Janey had no time to answer. There was the sound of a footstep crunching the gravel and the Macallisters tactfully left the family problem and were well on the way toward the solution of Socialism by the time Alan had come through the hall and the living-room. Only Bobs, unable to adjust himself as quickly as the rest to family proprieties, vouchsafed a low confidence.

"Janey would like awful well to get married," he said very low, his mouth close to Alan's ear, "but 'Licia told her she'd got to teach till she was sixty and be superintendent, instead."

The Macallisters were not listening. Alan and Bobs always were having queer confidences in corners. They none of them mentioned the matter of teaching; and Janey, sitting beside Hugh, joined almost not at all in their laughing argumentativeness. Presently she

spoke to Bobs and the two went off together for a bed-time chat; and although he stayed outrageously late, Alan did not see her again.

From the stone step of his cottage he watched the lights in the upper half of the old house wink out one after another. When the last had gone, he swung himself up on the old stone wall and threw pebbles for some moments at the window from which Janey's face had looked out at him that rainy morning. He thought he saw the misty shadow of a face behind the impenetrable window pane above him and through the makeshift megaphone of his rounded hands he called her name softly. Called it again; and again a little louder. A light turned on and off in that room. He settled himself on the top of the wall to wait sixty seconds—counted slowly. If she had not come by then—

"I am twenty-five years old," Janey said severely, as she slipped around the corner of the house into a festive garden flooded with the splendor of moonlight gold and the sheen of moonlight silver, "and never before has any young man whistled me out of the house to look at the moon. Probably all the rest of the Macallisters are coming down at this moment—hearing you shouting my name like that."

He kneeled on the coping and laughed down at her.

"Stand on the bench," he ordered. "Take hold of my wrist strongly. So. There. Ready? Jump."

She felt herself swung capably upward. The next instant she was facing him on the wall's top, breathless but quite composed. He laughed again softly at that

air of fixed composure and, leaning forward so that he need miss, in the shifting moonlight, no slightest quiver of expression, he spoke without preface.

"I—love you."

Something happened to Janey's eyes. They seemed to grow wide and deeply solemn. In them was depth and distance and cool hidden places.

"I—love you," said Alan very evenly, but the hands he put on hers were shaking.

"It's absurd—"

"Of course. Did you think absurdity went out of life because one grows old? You're twenty-five, you said. I'm thirty-five. Heart o' mine, I've searched the world across for you these fifteen years."

"But I—"

"I—love you," he said again, as if it were the refrain of a joyous song.

"There must be a thousand other women who—"

"More than that," Alan admitted. "Millions of—other women. But—I love *you*."

Her heart gave a great leap, half-joy, half new strange sorrow. And at the little quiver of her lips, Alan's narrow eyes grew grave.

"It—there isn't—is there—"

"There's no one."

"For ten days now I have been horribly afraid. But if I've an even chance—"

"There are a hundred things—"

"A hundred stones it took to build this wall, Beloved." She looked at him, puzzled. Her mind was straying, intent on the possible small matters that might come between to take away her happiness. She



He leaned nearer and gripped the slender fingers lying so quietly in her lap. "Won't you come over the wall, Heart o' mine?"

had her woman's grain of superstition, had Janey Macallister.

"Father, Bobs. There's the Big House and the—letter. It's Opportunity. The Macallisters will be—disappointed. They've never had a chance really to be proud before. After all, I'm a Macallister. And—'Licia said it to-night—the Macallister women aren't the Mid-Victorian, marrying sort." At that he laughed mightily.

"Set them stone on stone," he cried. "Build it as high as your hands can devise, and never will this wall of yours be high enough to keep your songs pent, Beloved. And your songs—betray you. Do you know what it is you sing down there? The songs, perhaps, you used to hear, coming back faintly. *Your* songs—home-songs and mother-songs and little lilting lullabies. If," his face went sober and his voice husky with longing, "if you'd only climb the wall and sing them. For me—and mine." He leaned nearer and gripped the slender fingers lying so quietly in her lap. "Won't you come over the wall, Heart o' mine?"

Janey's face turned away from his to the windy moon and the driven clouds and the wan river. It seemed while they sat in that moment's silence that Life itself came to her, tiptoeing across the fragrant garden, with her arms full of happy gifts. And in her soul there stirred that strange revolution that comes to every woman—Mid-Victorian or Modern—or dark-eyed Chaldean riding her tinkling mule along the dusty roads to Babylon—the passionate spiritual subjection that answers love. Janey's mouth quirked at the corners, half-amused, half-wistful for the girl who had

wasted time to run away from love when she might have gone to meet it, open-hearted.

"I seem to have done that little thing," she said demurely. Her hands slipped up to his shoulder. Her face pressed, cold and sweet, against his. "Alan—don't waste time kissing my—fingers."

They sat a long time while the moon waned and the stars went down the sky. And they talked of innumerable things, the smallest of all significant; of his buying the little stone cottage close under the Macallister wall and the purpose behind it; and what it was that he had tried to tell her the night of the Portrait party; and of what he thought next morning when he found her gone; and the long mornings when he sat and waited patiently and she did not come to dig the long flower beds about the garden; and of his terrible oath of that very morning, when he had set out on his pursuit of her. But they did not talk at all of the Macallisters. For if they had they would have talked perhaps of Mildred or of what Alicia had said when she had come in to give Janey her first confidence or of the long days when Alan had dragged through the merry-makings that Janey did not share. It would have been bootless indeed—talk like that. But when he set her gently down on the stone bench, Alan looked deep into her eyes and laughed.

"You better let me tell your tribe," he warned her. "They'll call you a renegade, you know."

Janey shivered a little at the certainty of that. She was thinking of Mildred mostly, when she shook her head.

"To-morrow?" Alan whispered.

"No—no. Not to-morrow, Alan—"

"When, then? Can't we—"

"Do we have to—just yet? I—can't. You see, I'm not quite used to it myself."

"But, Heart o' mine—"

"Alan—please. This is just our own. Do we—do we need to share the wonder of it, right away?"

His lips touching her finger tips as they slid away from his, answered her. He took out an ancient pipe and lighted it while he watched her cross the dusky garden. And all at once, her voice floated joyously back to him and he smiled irrepressibly. For the song that Janey sang was this,

"My true love hath my heart and I have his
By just exchange each to the other given—"

She sang it for all the world to hear—and the Macallisters, should any of them be foolish enough to be awake. The song stole out through the night like a subtle fragrance that creeps unaware into his senses and is the last thing a man ever forgets.

"I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss
There never was a better bargain driven.
My true love hath my heart—
My true love hath my heart—and I—and I have his."

One of Dale Macallister's songs it was—ringing and lilting with her happiness. But Alan did not know that till long after. The thing that occurred to him—while his pipe went out and he sat there smiling into the dark—was that Janey, irrevocably, impenitently had done for herself. And quite without deciding whether she was Mid-Victorian or Modern.

CHAPTER XIII

"I CAN'T believe it, quite," Hugh said morosely. "How about you, Marcia?"

"There've been the most persistent rumors for a fortnight," Marcia said with a puzzled shake of her head. "Who told you?"

"Starr Larkin talked, coming out this noon, casually," Don answered for him. "He didn't seem excited. I gather the whole town has been expecting it for three years."

Marcia, lying on the sofa between them, looked out through the vines toward the Highway. There was a flat silk fan lying beside her, the color of a deep American Beauty rose, that Hugh had sent her from a far-off shop in Japan. She took it up and held it so that a soft rosy light played over her face.

"Has he been at the house lately?" she asked, pursing her mouth in thought.

"He came to the last party. And Janey's been away."

"He's out of town," Don said. "Been gone a fortnight."

"Perhaps they're waiting till he comes back," Mildred said with an odd intensity in the voice that usually drawled words smoothly. "You heard what Janey said the other night. I think it amounts to an announce-

ment. Not that I went so far as to wish her happiness," she added with a return to lightness.

Hugh turned to look at her, for Mildred's enthusiasm sat upon her strangely, almost as if she had something at stake in Janey's happiness. He would as soon have suspected Alicia's genial indifference as a cloak for determined match-making. But his faint suspicions were forestalled.

"Janey ought to have all the things any normal woman wants," Marcia said slowly. "She'd admit that first of any of us, if you could get her to mention it at all. Janey's old-fashioned about speaking out."

"Mid-Victorian—"

"Put! Normal—so tremendously normal she seems a bit strange. She ought to have a normal home and—happy children—"

"And Stephen."

"Oh, I hope not Stephen. Life's been so absurdly safe for Stephen."

Mildred sat very straight, a vivid spot of color in either cheek.

"And what, pray, has life been for Janey?"

"Not—restricted. She's had her flights—purely imaginary, I grant you. But long. As for Stephen—he's efficient. And it means walled. Every year he's building higher his barricade of books. He plans well. He's always known what he was going to do a good five years in advance. School—he took honors. College—he took honors. Deserves credit for it—plodding along. Graduate school and the technique of his job specialized. His job—teaching. He's stuck to it. He likes it, probably—well enough. Life's ab-

surdly easy for Stephen—between the school office and the coddling Anne gives him at home—and it's immeasurably secure—and very, very dull."

"But Janey—"

Marcia's eyes, resting on Hugh, grew starry and tender.

"Janey hasn't—lived yet. She's just beginning this summer. Wait. She's a Macallister like the rest of you. Remember, Stephen *chose* his sober, safe, academic grind. He likes it. It's respectable. It's authoritative. He can make enough to live the curiously limited, secure life that the educated person who makes enough to live on in his curiously limited secure way, has. And he likes it—"

"Wouldn't Janey?"

Marcia did not answer just at once. When she did, the thing she said seemed beside the mark to every one but Hugh.

"I can remember just how intoxicating it would be to feel your body thrill with vitality when you struck the cold water and began to push it back behind you. Sometimes, lying here, I can remember how it would feel to swing a tennis racket as easily as I'd lift my fan; or run—fast—on a horse's back. It's not only a physical feeling—that sense of plunging into daring things and pushing through. It's just the urge any live person feels to—live hard. You have it. You have it—and Alicia—and Don—and Janey."

"But not Stephen?"

"One might as well come to the stile." Mildred stood up with a gesture of impatience. Her lips were tight at the corners. "Accept the man and have done with

it. Why dream dreams and see visions? Wearing, don't you think?" She turned and peered out through the vines at a figure approaching on the Highway from Fairfield. Then she stepped out from the cool shadows of the porch and stood on the steps, the sunlight touching the gold threads in her hair. Alan slowed as he neared the gate.

"Going my way?"

"Both of us," Don sang out and followed Mildred. "I fancy we've done this subject justice."

But at that they did not banish it. Probably no really upright family would comment on their absent members, but the Macallisters usually did, discussing the missing one and all his works. Mildred, falling into step with Alan, returned to the point under discussion at once.

"We've been talking over Janey's engagement. Have you heard?" And Alan's eyes beneath the pulled-down brim of his soft hat grew merry.

"Why—yes. I've heard a good deal about it."

"You see," she turned triumphantly to Don, "every one has heard it. Every one has been expecting it. You only have to look at Janey, anyway. She's been fairly bubbling for days."

"What about—the man?" Alan asked.

"Never a word shall I say to him till Janey sees fit to tell us," Don said. "The man can go hang till then."

"She said to me that the Macallisters were talkative," Alan admitted reluctantly, "and the fellow's a bit shy, you might say."

"Yes, I know he is. Did Janey tell you herself?"

We've been taking in the gossip with reservations. Marcia's for denying it, and Hugh's about sick."

"Hugh? Sick?"

"He'll recover." Mildred slipped her hand through Alan's arm and changed her step to suit his. "Discreet of Janey, eh? Avoiding condolences—she'll probably feel that she must go on working—"

"More fool she if she doesn't," Don broke in with gloom. "I say she's hanging fire too long as it is. She acts as if the Chicago schoolboard were quite negligible. It's a chance she'd better cinch while she can."

"Perhaps she's planning not to teach," Alan suggested with the utmost calm. After a moment Mildred conceded that.

"She would be the sort. But whatever—it seems as if she would hardly deny the rumors, if there's a grain of truth in them. She ought to come out. It isn't right to Stephen."

It was to the credit of Alan's years of training in minor shocks that no muscle quivered on his face. For all that he showed of surprise Mildred might have mentioned Stephen Mayo with her first sentence. But the talk grew remarkably stale and profitless at that moment for Alan. Janey environed by Stephen Mayo's world? It was unthinkable. Didn't the Macallisters mind such incongruities in the least? Here were her nearest, bandying her name idly with that of a man whose very existence was unreal. He had the human desire to brush them away and find Janey herself and take back, once for all, the promise of silence he had given her. He did not appear to understand Mildred's suggestion of tea. He conceded with a weary smile

the additional grain of proof which had occurred to Don and which brought him to a stop at Alan's gate for a further session of conflicting comment. He could not even betray the utter indifference he felt toward Stephen Mayo and his prospects. What good would it do to tell these unbelievers that Mayo might take himself to Jericho for all that Alan cared? He could only shake his head with a murmur of pressing work to be done; and go up the path to the door under the low-hanging branches of the crab-apple tree, to wait until the others had gone safely through the garden to the house.

A cautious reconnoiter revealed no trace of Janey in the garden, no sign of her on the screened porch. He edged about the kitchen doorway and down through the garden that fell gently toward the scalloped edge of the river, brown among its surging grasses. He had reached the furthestmost end when a faint halloo reached him from the meadow beyond and he swerved across the wide stretch of bottoms searching. A straw stack set well back from the road with a wide shelf cut in its side and a ladder leaning suggestively up toward a rustling throne, gleaming gold where the straws stuck into the sun, proved the end of his journey. He found Janey sitting far back in that fragrant nook, a new magazine lying face down on the shelf beside her, her lap heaped with the rich, rank flowers of the August fields, Joe-pye weed, boneset, elder, rose-mallow. Her laughing eyes peered over them to rest on his still troubled face.

"Will you come into my parlor?" she invited him. "I found your hostess just now—a big, yellow spider with

zigzag stairs of white in her net—sign that summer is ending, Alan. And I've spent two full hours of it thinking of you."

He climbed the ladder until he could look up into her sunwarmed face with a steady, whimsical scrutiny. Then he said:

"Jane Macallister, are you—honestly—going to marry me?"

"Marry you," she flung at him with heart-staying promptness. "You can't lose me."

With that he climbed still farther and sat down on the hay shelf beside her, his legs dangling over the edge. They were completely sheltered. No one on the Highway could see them; and before them stretched only the meadow and the river where corn was ready for the gathering and the clover was high across the fields.

"Then let's tell the tribe, Janey. It's come to a pass where I can hardly bite the words back. I want to shout it at the stupid things. Let's go shouting round together."

"But—not yet, Alan. Life's so—nice just now. Here I can come off by myself and never a Macallister guessing that I'm doing anything more romantic than going over the laundry list. It's my secret and I don't want them in on it—yet."

But she was thinking most of Mildred. It seemed absurd not to believe the hint Alicia had given her; absurd to suppose that any woman could fail to be on the threshold of love when Alan came near her doorway. Mildred would be going back to New York in another month. And shy as Janey still was, it would

be infinitely easier to send the magic announcement by letter.

"Did I tell you I've set my wedding-day?" she said suddenly to prod him from his silence.

"Janey—"

"If ever a spinster should be thankful it's for a proposal—a Mid-Victorian spinster, you know, Alan—down on one's marrow bones and fasting. And the last week in November there comes a day—" Alan's hand went over hers in a tight clasp.

"A long time—November."

"I'm going to teach—not Chicago. I've refused that. I—"

"Please let me tell them, Janey," he returned to the attack. "There's no reason—"

"Except my wishes."

He caught his lip between his teeth and sat considering that for the space of a full sixty seconds. He wished she did not look so endearing beside him, her dark hair shadowy against the deep gold of the straw.

"The cave men had it easier," he mused. "We poor evolved beings who hold ourselves to pleasing. I never cared to be an Igorot Chieftain before, woman. He'd take steps to stop talk—"

"Talk—"

"Rumors and echoes of rumors. Your whole family is on the scent. They've all but married you—bell, book and candle to Stephen Mayo."

"Stephen? Oh, that's too bad, Alan. Stephen will hate that."

Alan drew a breath of utter relief. And he laughed ruefully.

"I'd no idea I was so—mad with jealousy," he said to her. "I could have considered Vollmar—but the torment of this last half-hour—coupling your name with his—with any man's. It's been a bit difficult all summer for me to see just straight when I looked at him."

"Poor old Stephen," Janey said, to the last quieting of nerves for Alan. A woman doesn't use that tone when there is—or has been—any possibility for the other man. "Tell me what to do, Alan."

"Say you love me."

"As if—" said Janey and drew fingers that would shake away from his. "As if I ever did or ever could—anybody but you, my dear."

"Then—may I tell the Macallisters?"

But she sat upright and pushed the hair away from her forehead with a thoughtful gesture.

"It—would be like slapping Stephen in the face. Hurt his pride—our flaunting *our* happiness to disprove—"

"His?"

Janey dimpled. But she did not betray Stephen even then.

"I can kill that yarn. I haven't lived all my life in this village for nothing. Who told you?"

"Mildred and Don. I met them coming from Marcia's."

"Who told them?"

"I don't know. I didn't ask."

Janey put out a slim foot and felt for the top rung of the ladder. Then she swung herself about and began to descend.

"Where are you going?" Alan asked.

"I'm going straight to Anne. She'll tell me everything from the beginning."

But in that Janey overrated Anne. She thought of her in the terms of the impersonal to which the Macallisters that summer had accustomed her. And Anne was anything but that.

It was nothing unusual for Janey to slip away from the Lodge and share a basket lunch with Anne at the library, in the private office where she kept her desk and which had once been a downstairs bedroom, its original use typified by the marble basin growing yellow in the corner of the room. Fairfield's library had once been a rambling house, topping the crest of the hill and looking imperturbably out across the river's bend. Its parlors had been thrown together into a sunny reading room with a marble fireplace at either end, the mantel supported by slender grooved pilasters carved with white roses that threw delicate shadows against the cold stone. They were usually empty at the supper hour, for all the town dined with a communal regularity. They were empty now and Janey's footfall in the wide vestibule resounded through the high-ceilinged rooms. Anne, sitting rigid behind her flat-topped desk, watched her come between the tables of the outer room with eyes that smoldered. She did not move aside the heap of books at the outer edge of the desk, and her answers to Janey's opening essays were monosyllabic and wholly detached.

Janey guessed shrewdly that the dark mood had to do with the very thing that had brought her to Anne. "She's a sort of blind side where Stephen is con-

cerned," Marcia had said once. "One can't object to that. The blind side of each of us is probably the most human thing we have." Janey remembered that as she put down her round woven basket on the corner of the desk. She was very fond of Anne, and more disturbed over the flicker of gossip that had linked her name with Stephen's than she had cared to show to Alan. It was odd how little her feeling for Stephen had changed. It was only that that all-revealing tumultuous response that Alan roused in her had driven her forever out of Stephen's reach. She trembled to think that, blindly, she might have called it love and taken his friendliness as the utmost life could bring to her. She thought she might tell that to Anne who had, at least, a frank stability that was like firm ground under one's feet. She spoke flatly and without reserve.

"There's something I wanted to talk over with you, Anne."

For answer, Anne rose and stepped about the desk to close the door with a significant caution. Then she came back and sat down in silence, waiting.

"Mildred and Don heard some gossip—" Janey began again, uncomfortably.

"Yes."

"Have you heard it, Anne? Yourself?"

"Yes."

"Would you tell me—?"

"No." She shut her lips, sharply perioding the sentence. Then she broke out passionately. "I'm trying my best to keep it from Stephen. I've never been so sorry for anything in my whole life."

"Nor I. It's what I came about. I want it stamped out before it reaches him. We can do it, can't we, Anne?"

But Anne was deaf to that. She flung out her accusation directly.

"You had no right—to make it possible. You must have known—"

Janey hesitated, pale, distressed, but outwardly calm. How could she make it plain, without flaunting her happiness cruelly to Anne's eyes? She answered steadily.

"You'll have to believe that I didn't know. You'll have to believe that."

"That you never suspected? Never led him on?"

"Never led him on. No. And only—looking back—have I suspected. He's been easy to work with always—and this year a little easier than ever before. He's been kind and friendly since I first knew him, and this year a little kinder and a little more friendly. That is all. Now—"

"He said—" Anne spoke as if pursuing her own thoughts in a dull round—" 'She's been looking past me all the time.' That's what *he* sees—looking back."

Janey was conscious at that of two distinct and somewhat diverse states of mind. She was intensely sorry for Anne, who loved her Stephen. But try as she would to smother it, she could not help a flicker of humor at the situation. If Stephen had been removed to the other side of the earth he could have been no farther away from her than he was at the moment Anne presented him for Janey's reconsideration. It meant that, this confidence. Yet Stephen as a factor

in her existence could never mean more than a shadow on a moving picture screen could. Certainly no more real to Janey.

"Anne—I care for Stephen just as deeply as I ever did. The things that have drawn us together—the three of us—will help us past this."

"Are you as cold as that?"

"Cold? I—cold? Why, if you—" She stopped in a breath, her skin growing flushed under Anne's merciless eyes.

"There's somebody else— That musician. That was what Stevie meant. You're looking past him." She was mounting into a cold fury, her voice low with anger. "When it comes down to the point, it simply means Fairfield snobbery—a Mayo isn't good enough for a Macallister."

"Anne," Janey sprang to her feet and faced the stony, erect woman. It was as if, in the quiet room, they met and clashed like steel. The furtive lingering envy of years shot up into a rank, vindictive growth. "This means the parting of the ways, Anne?" she asked gently. "Is that it? Things end here?"

"You've ended things with Stephen." Anne drew a long breath. Her voice had a dead intonation. "Why not with me? What's a friendship between women?"

"I—don't know," Janey said dully. "It seems impossible that these ten years have counted for nothing. It seems impossible that all we have shared together centers in Stephen. Can't two women care for each other without involving some man?" She stopped and looked at the other woman curiously. "It's—odd. You even look different to me, Anne. I suppose I do

to you. I suppose I seem like a person who never really existed—now that you're seeing me as a—coquette, leading Stephen on. Perhaps we are Mid-Victorians—both of us—you and I. Perhaps we can't be Modern. You don't know what I'm talking about, of course. I'm sorry we've—come to the fork. You'll believe that?" She lifted her slender hand with a friendly gesture. "At least we can inter the remains decently. Let's. Between us we shall have to kill these rumors before they reach Stephen. Would you—"

"I have no suggestions as to stopping the story," Anne returned evenly. "Considering how it started—"

"Started? How it started?"

"One of the Macallisters announced it informally but—unmistakably—three weeks ago. The day before Stephen went off. I was a week myself learning it was—a lie."

"Anne. That couldn't be true. It *couldn't*. It—"

Anne took up a book and turned back to her catalogue with an air of finality.

"Couldn't it? It seems to me quite feasible—quite of the same piece with the way you treated him yourself."

Without a word Janey turned and went out. She had no answer to make to this new accusation, for all that it seemed to her of the wildest impossibility. She thought of the Macallisters individually. Hugh with his dark eyes and his firm, easy sincerity; Alicia, genially indifferent, impersonally generous; Don, self-absorbed and oblivious—Don was quite out of the question; Mildred, too, with her light derisiveness and her

smooth bright polish. The Judge? Had there been some absent-minded statement that Mrs. Whitby overheard? Or was it Franc? Franc had held herself aloof for weeks—ever since Vollmar had first asked Janey to drive with him. Did she care enough for him for that? Was she seeking trivial ways to prick at Janey's pride? Franc, for all her moods, held herself in the main to modern qualities—she boasted of that. She was not little in anything. It could not be Franc.

The prairie twilight was darkening about her, the sky lowering from gold to purple after the fervid splendor of the sunset. A gray half light deepened as the color died from the world and the etching of a crescent moon gleamed delicately through the dusk. Above the river an iridescent mist stretched and covered the meadows, turning all surfaces to silver and strange, shimmering lavender. Another night Janey would have loitered along the Road drinking in the beauty of the soft night, lingering to watch the change of graying colors. But she was stirred by a deeper feeling than she had known since the Macallisters came. Little things came sharply back to her. Anne's bitter lips closing against her friendliness; the sound of Stephen's footsteps going down the garden walk; that memory of that first night when the Macallisters had called her "Mid-Victorian"—she could never forget that, Janey told herself; Mrs. Whitby, standing beside her bridal wreath and voicing the query that was deep in Janey's mind. "What will the summer bring to you?" Enough, she decided. It had brought her love—and a new color in the world. It had brought her the

friendship of a man who had gone beyond the power of loving any woman. These were its gifts. And for them it had taken a price. Anne and Stephen, set outside, by the very barrier love had built about her. She was painfully conscious of their going. It was a mile and a half from the crest of the hill to the Lodge; and every step of the way Janey grew more angry.

At Alan's gate she hesitated. A light showed through the doorway, a dull oblong, from the shaded lamp, that seemed only a phosphorescent smear against the formless blackness. She had meant at first to go straight back to him, but, standing at his gate, she could not. Alan made all her world, and yet she was confronted with a situation that did not include him. It included no one save the Macallisters and herself. She felt them all arrayed against her in disloyalty that marked the gulf stretching between them. The thing cut her like a surgeon's lancet. They did not care. Their lives were not like hers. They could turn disloyal where she was concerned, as if she were not and could never be one of them. She smiled a thin and bitter little smile when, turning in between the larches at her own gate, she caught a glimpse of the marble seat where Alan had begged her to tell the Macallisters of the new thing that had come into life for her. Absurd, that was. They were so far away that speech itself could hardly reach them. She stood utterly apart from them. A great loneliness swept over her.

Yet she went on steadily up the steps and through the living-room to the porch beyond. They looked up startled as she stepped across the threshold. And even before she spoke their eyes turned toward each

other questioningly. For Janey, angry, was very beautiful. She stood before them, the breeze molding her thin gown about her until she looked like a Tanagra figurine, endowed with vivid life—her slender hands rested in the crook of her arms, her chin tilted with pride, her eyes wide and dark with feeling.

“Some one of you has done a shameful thing.” There was a stabbing poignancy in her voice. Hugh, taking up his pipe, eyed it longingly and put it down again. But Janey did not notice his movement toward her, nor his slow look at Mildred sitting beside the lamp. “It doesn’t matter which of you it was. The dreadful thing is that, in this last half-hour, it’s seemed to me it might be any one of you. Do you understand that? That’s what our coming home together this summer has meant. We’ve drifted far enough so that even that bond has—broken. We used to owe each other loyalty at least. It could not have happened if—” But even she could not speak of her mother then. Her gallant gayety had no share in this. She looked incredibly young, standing before them with that hot contempt in her eyes and her voice.

“Some one,” she went on after an instant of dead silence, “gave it out that I was engaged to Stephen Mayo. Mrs. Whitby, I think, took that tidbit away from this house. At least she’s spread it through Fairfield. You don’t know just what such a thing means here, in this tiny town—every one bandying your name—and speculating. You’ve lived too long in your big, impersonal cities. You don’t care enough about other people yourselves. I’m not blaming Mrs. Whitby for enjoying being the first to tell news. But the

quickest way to stop a stream is to dam it at its source. And I wish to have this gossip stopped. It is not true; it has never been true for one instant; it never will be true. I'm asking you—whichever of you it is—to go to Mrs. Whitby and tell her that. She'll spread it just as fast as the other. I don't care what explanation you see fit to make. I've no doubt Macallister inventiveness and—initiative will come to the rescue."

If they had any answer, Janey did not wait to hear it. She turned and went away from them as swiftly and silently as she had come. At the top of the stair her own door opened before her into her own room, dark and infinitely comforting. It was as if anger dropped away as she crossed the threshold. She sat down in the low rocking-chair by the window and pressed her cheek against the cool pane. And as she did so a breeze floated up from the fragrant garden and touched her face delicately as a caressing finger. It brought her the perfume of flowers wet with the early dew and of the pungent earth, rich and homely scents that Dale Macallister had loved. From far-off, down the Highway, there came the sound of singing—only an echo trailing into the distance, dropping, even while she strained her ears to listen, into silence— Some merry-makers, driven swiftly by, chancing on one of the old songs that Dale Macallister had sung happily to her children. Janey found herself humming—

"Though Death come out to meet him,
Love will find out the way."

She turned her face, a smile trembling about her mouth, out to the soft, odorous night. She did not

try to reason it, or even to think about it very much. But she had a deep sense of comfort and new courage, drawn from that brave and joyous spirit as surely as it had been when Dale Macallister had been alive.

CHAPTER XIV

A DENSE silence settled down upon the porch after Janey had gone up the stairs. There was a futile attempt to break it once or twice. Some one spoke of a new book, and in its criticism there was a sustained sentence or two of each man's making, without any conflicting volubility—it was very unMacallisterish. When the last opinion was periodod by a lengthening pause, the Judge pushed back his chair and went out to walk up and down the garden. Don turned to skimming through the pile of evening papers. Frances left them for the piano and played softly, with a veiled touch, gliding from one melody to another until the house was filled with a drift of sound that seemed like a voice of its own shadows. But Janey did not come down at the invitation, and for the Macallisters, listening, that languid tide of music became a forced interlude, a mechanical refuge from the thoughts pressing in upon them.

For the moment their intercourse had narrowed to one idea. There was not one of them who did not find in their attitude toward Janey a subtle change. Indefinable were the sources of that change—Vollmar, perhaps, looking at her with bold admiration in his eyes; the Portrait, subtle with its suggestion of an expectant spirit; the new look of lovely ruddiness and

pride of bearing; anger, even, and the contempt that she had showed, defying their futile explanations. Each of them shared a feeling of guiltiness. If Janey's indictment were true, some one of them had failed; and deep within them all was the instinctive pride of race that in childhood had made their loyalty to their kind the first of virtues. Hugh smoked silently in the corner of the porch. He made no pretense of reading like the others. He watched Mildred yawn and put down her book, yawn again and inspect her pink nails, idly. When she left her chair and sauntered toward the hall, he followed.

"I will go with you, if you like," he said deliberately.

"Go with me? Where?"

"To Mrs. Whitby's."

"Really?" She lifted her eyebrows and smiled amusedly. "I wasn't considering going to Mrs. Whitby, Hugh."

"You will, I think," he answered with a quiet arrogance that overreached her own. "Afterward, you'll go to Janey."

"Knight-errantry?"

"You owe it to the rest of us."

"To go to Janey." He was surprised that she made no effort at denial. "But Mrs. Whitby?"

"You owe *that*—" he made an infinitesimal pause—"to Janey."

Mildred shrugged and smiled at him, a curiously quiet smile.

"If you had finished 'to yourself,' " she informed him carelessly, "it would have been one of the most excellent little imitations one could wish for in this world of

platitudes. I could have closed my eyes and heard Drury Pennell to the very life. He was apt to play conscience—for me.”

“Was he, indeed?” Hugh inquired with interest. “I think you have intimated that it bored you. Or was it that—that bored you?”

“It bored me”—she echoed gravely—“beyond all words.”

She was a woman who had all woman’s arts at her finger tips. She knew when to disdain, when to be sweet, when to threaten, when to cajole, when to hide a subtle thrust behind light irony. Perhaps the only person in the world with whom her finished practice failed was the man who had been her husband.

“If you *will* be disloyal”—Hugh pursued in his even voice—“and dishonest—even you explicit Moderns sometimes allow yourselves that privilege, I’ve noticed—if you *will* start gossip—”

He had her angry now. She blazed and paled and blazed again. But her voice was as quiet as his own.

“Quite personal, aren’t you?” she said disdainfully. It was the worst indictment that one Macallister could fling at another; but Hugh remained unperturbed.

“Thank God,” he said piously, “it argues that there’s something human in me still. Shall we go to Mrs. Whitby’s?”

For answer, Mildred flung aside his hand and walked straight up the stairs to Janey.

“It was I told Mrs. Whitby you were engaged,” she said coolly, as she crossed the threshold.

“You?” Janey herself heard the surprise in her voice and knew that unconsciously she had been accus-

ing Frances since Anne had told her the truth. "Why should you?"

"The poor old thing looked so bored and hot." Mildred closed the door and dropped companionably into a chair beside the table. "Is there a cigarette anywhere about? I *try* to leave them in every room—"

"Desk drawer—right-hand side," Janey answered absently. She was still pondering, her feelings now that the heat of anger had subsided, queer and uneven, now surging up, now cold and still. Had she made more of a fool of herself than rage usually manages to make of people? Mildred took the event lightly enough. Incongruous memories floated through her thought—the grotesque shadows Mildred's tiny figure had thrown on the walls as she danced in the firelight to her mother's playing; the look of her dainty, curly head, gleaming gold in the sunlight as she flashed here and there about the garden; the lithe, free swing of her slender figure skating along the river ahead of Dru on the last Christmas they had come home together. She was girlish-looking still, and yet there were compressions at the corner of her mouth, brown eyes that at times looked hard set in her wise little face; a timber of audacity in her sweet voice.

"It seemed all right," Mildred resumed as she scratched a match. "I knew Mrs. W. loved a bit like that—piping hot and served caviar-fashion. And it has certainly looked all summer as if Heaven were occupied with the affair— Sorry I stirred up a hornet's nest for you, Jane."

"Stephen's such a sensitive. He minds a thing like that. And he might have grown past it so easily if—"

"Then he did propose?"

"Yes," Janey said wearily. "He did me—that honor. Let's not talk about it, please."

"Of course you were wrought up to-night," Mildred began with a forgiving accent in her words. "You'd never have blazed in on us and said those awful things to the family at large. It was dreadful, Janey, really. Not that I misunderstand. I know it's horrible to feel the pressure of a little place, where every one is so overly interested in your affairs. May one ask why you didn't accept Stephen, by the way?"

"I do not love him," Janey answered shortly. "I—I think I'll tell you something, Dred. I—"

"Love." Mildred crushed her cigarette into the tray before her where it glowed redly. "A chimera, my dear, of youth. *I* married for love—" She sighed pensively. "One is jolly well paid for *that* fit of madness. I think Stephen Mayo is a very charming person, myself."

"Do you?"

"Doubtless there are as good fish in the sea. Vollmar is quite worth while—if he lasts. Not for your net, I take it. Starr Larkin? That would bring Emily Vibart into play. She's saving him for Peggy. Arnold Cope? But what would Alicia do for some one to play around with when she comes home? Serve her right to find him married some time. Austin Rutherford?" She laughed and stood up, her smooth head gleaming under the shaded light. "Any number of possibilities for a butterfly, Janey. But you'll probably come back to Stephen yet. One does."

"I shall not marry Stephen," Janey said quietly.

"Well"—she was at the door, swinging it lightly back and forth between her slender hands—"so long as your imagination doesn't run off with your affections, one doesn't worry. Only you must know that not every unattached man is contemplating matrimony." She had been gone a full minute when Janey heard her light step outside the door.

"Did you say you wanted me to go and straighten the thing out with Medora Whitby? I'd probably muddle things for you, and I'd hate that." There was a mocking ripple of laughter just underneath her words and Janey shook her head, her lips tight at the corners.

"I will go to Mrs. Whitby," she said steadily. She wondered with a return of the bitter sensitiveness that had been lessening these past weeks, if Mildred thought her so stupid as not to understand that she meant Alan—was, in a word, warning her away from the preserves to which she herself laid claim. Tacitly, in a thousand small ways, Mildred had annexed him from the first of the summer, since, like Alicia, she needed some one to play with to make Fairfield amusing. As clearly as if she had put it into words, Janey saw Mrs. Pennell's motive. Doubtless, she thought an understanding did exist. The Macallisters had rather hugged that delusion all summer. And she had chosen for some deep, unacknowledged reason of her own, to hasten the crisis. Perhaps she had thought that rumors reaching them might even make firm whatever subtle indecision existed in Janey's thought or Stephen's. Janey's lip curled in the dark. Stephen!

Stephen—who moved like a shadowy phantom in her vivid world.

The thought of Alan swept over her. She did not need his words to tell her how tremendously he cared. She felt suddenly humble that two such men, Stephen and Alan, should have given her so much. Mildred had said that love was a chimera of youth; and Janey put up a wordless prayer that she be kept forever young. Twice that night she had been on the point of giving away her secret, of cheapening, it seemed to her now, the wonder that the summer had brought her. Facing the Macallister's, she had had the impulse to fling the truth at them half-contemptuously as proof that Fairfield's gossip was untrue. She had almost spoken it aloud to Mildred, before Mrs. Pennell had for all time shut out Janey's confidences. Now she decided that they should not know. After the Macallisters were gone, she and Alan could tell her father; and some quiet autumn afternoon they would be married in the Lodge and walk across the garden to the little stone house. It would be as simple as that. Meanwhile, Alan, who understood, would help her guard this thing that she did not wish them to know. She had no confidences for the Macallisters.

For she had drifted farther than she knew, farther than she would have believed possible, even the day before. They seemed altogether alien, sharing no memory of hers, sharing nothing of the old life, having no part even in the garden that Dale Macallister had fashioned for them. It was a dream—that intangible wish that the bonds which had held them close as

children could draw them close again. They could not go beyond a superficial friendliness. The old hot loyalty, the old pride in each other, alike were lost in lesser things. It was, perhaps, the price one paid for happiness and success that they could no longer help each other, could no longer even talk of the beloved Presence that seemed at times, to Janey, to fill the house. She was aware that she was no longer angry. The issue of the evening had faded a little. She could go to Mrs. Whitby and manage to set things right. She could become insensate to everything save the joy that Alan's love had brought her; eager only for the Macallisters to go away, back to the great cities from which they came and leave her to be shut away with Alan in a world of their own four walls.

Downstairs, the house had grown very still. Frances had stopped her playing and joined the rubber of bridge into which Mildred, restless with idleness, had inveigled Don and Alicia. Hugh had gone out, to Marcia Powell's, probably, and the Judge was spending the evening with Alan Campbell. From her window Janey could see dark, shadowy figures on the low stone step and sniff at the scent of their tobacco. Presently Bobs thumped up the stairs to bed. He with his friends, carefully graduated down to the fourth best, had been using up the family tickets to the Chautauqua held in a big tent on the Square. He was full of this hospitable undertaking and talked incessantly, as he undressed, dropping his garments wherever he happened to step out of them, on Janey's threshold, in the hall, in Hugh's room, at the door of the bath. Between the sentences of the letter she was writing

Janey could hear his voice going on and on, above the rush of the shower, drowsily lifted above even the rebellious creak of the bed when he dropped his full weight upon it. She went to him, picking up his belongings on the way, and put out his light and gave him cheerily the old good night: "Dream sweet, dear. A new day's on its way to you." When she turned back again to her own room, she saw Frances waiting for her just beyond its open doorway. She had taken off her evening frock and put on a loose gown of filmy crimson. It outlined the curve of her shoulder and clung against her rounded arms, veiling the slim contours of her figure, and throwing into rich contrast the blackness of her hair and the dark eyes behind delicate lashes. Janey thought she had never seen Don's wife so beautiful.

"You thought it was I who—did that," Frances said at once. "Didn't you?"

"I—know who did it, Franc. It was a mistake. I shouldn't have stormed in on you as I did—"

"You know now. Mildred told us downstairs. She said she had explained."

"It was all a mistake," Janey reiterated half-helplessly. "I—"

"But just at first, you thought of me. You thought I could do that. And Don did, too. If you'd seen the look he gave me—searing. I—didn't know I cared so much what—Don thought." She gave an uncomfortable little laugh and crossed the room to drop into an easy chair by the window. Janey waited. She knew that there was something more than appeared on the surface; something unusual to have caused Frances to

drop her delicate arrogance and turn that half-grieved, half-childish face to Janey. Yet her next sentence seemed trivial.

Frances said: "I went up to Town to-day. Did you know?"

"This afternoon?"

"Yes. You were all away."

"About the concerts?" Frances shook her head.

"No. I didn't even telephone Eric Vollmar. I bought a new gown. I've been low in my mind for days. And it was nothing but that disreputable old rag I've worn all summer. And this frock was so exactly—" she broke off and her voice rippled into laughter. "I explained all that to Don. I'd come home and dressed myself up—very gay—in this new one, and—waited for him to notice. And when he didn't, I said I'd bought a party-dress and paid a great deal more for it than I had any right to. And he said—"

"Well?" Janey prodded her.

"He said," Franc went on, "'I'm glad you did. I never did like that thing you're wearing.' My new frock, Janey. I asked him what he didn't like about it. And he said he'd always thought it a bit conspicuous. Anyway, he didn't like it and he was mighty glad I'd found something new. I said: '*This* is the new gown.' I said it distinctly. '*This* is the *new* gown. I put it on for you to see.'"

"What did he say?" Janey asked, after the manner of confidants.

"He said, 'My word, Franc, I'm sorry. I should have known.' He did try, poor laddie, but he couldn't help going cool. 'I suppose you've bought it for the

concerts,' he said. Concerts." She laughed softly. "I—there's something I'm trying very hard to tell you, Janey."

At that Janey understood, seeing in a flash the situation behind the Incident of the Gown, comprehending the devious path of Frances' confidences. One thing she had to know.

"Are you—sorry, Franc?"

"Sorry?" There was a little wondering note in her low voice. "Sorry, Janey? Why, no." She flung out her hands with a quick, appealing gesture. "I—wanted it. It's—I must have been coming to this from the first, ever since the summer began. I tried to tell myself I wouldn't be enclosed, even by the walls of Don's house of life. I tried to tell myself the other things were bigger. I wanted them badly enough to make it seem so. But to-day—after I'd seen the doctor and knew—it seemed to me that I've never felt blessed peace before. There were problems ahead that *this* makes nothing." She twisted a square envelope that she held, face down, into the light and Janey saw that it was addressed to Vollmar. "My withdrawal. Dangerous for me—being with Vollmar. You wouldn't understand."

"Yes," Janey said slowly, "I can see—"

Frances was silent again, her arms crossed on her knees. When she spoke again, it was with a trace of shyness.

"It was you—partly," she said. "There's something eternally real about you, Janey. Your knowledge isn't all the honey-mead, lavender, potpourri sort. You grasp essentials. I used to wonder about you—"

what you got out of life. But now I know. You spend yourself in love, year after year; and you find happiness. You've taught me that this summer. You and your mother."

Janey hardly breathed. She closed her eyes against the quick tears, but Frances did not notice. She went on simply.

"It seems to me sometimes her Presence fills this house. And when I came I thought it would be like renewing acquaintance with some charming people at a summer hotel. It's anything but that. There are the things you say—there was your good night to Bobs just now. I asked Don about that once when I heard you. I had the worst time getting anything out of him. He was unconscionably curt about it. It's hard for you Macallisters to talk of her. Don never does."

"Yes," Janey said. Inimitably sweet, she thought, to hear that name on Franc's lips, since it was hard for the Macallisters. To Janey it was like drinking deep after a long thirst.

"There are the songs you sing: 'My true love hath my heart,' and 'Love will find out the way.' I've been using them for encores this last year. And they go over every time. People love them. They're such happy songs."

"Yes."

"If she'd been a Modern," Franc went on with a whimsical smile, "she probably would have talked about them as a 'means of self-expression.' But once in an old, yellowy letter I found in Don's desk, she explained why she made them. He must have been a little, little boy—for she was telling him always to believe in the

fairies. That all the little jigs and tunes she made for him to sing was the sure proof that they had come to her christening and left her their two nicest gifts—laughter and a singing heart—

“It sounds like Moth’,” Janey said, only half-aloud. “It sounds exactly like her. She was always saying things like that.”

“Well—if my music could live that way—as your mother’s has lived for all of you—in your very hearts, I can keep in touch with the musical crowd, studio concerts and all that. But the things I want are the—real things; the things that last.” Her voice dropped to a soft velvety note that carried into speech, the echo of her singing. “Will you come down with me, Janey? I’d like to—sing to-night. To the Macallisters.”

Janey nodded. She had time to remember, while Franc went back into her own room to dabble water on her eyes and smooth her hair, that she had left those same Macallisters in anger. It seemed, now, as if it had happened a long time ago. Alien they might be, but there was recompense in the new tenderness Don’s wife had brought her. She followed Franc, slowly, calling down to the others that they were coming. The new frock gleamed enticingly from the bed but after thorough contemplation Franc let it lie there and took the old one from the closet.

“So that Don will recognize me,” she explained to Janey. Then they went down to the others. Hugh had come in with his father and the others left their books and gathered close to the piano. It was that dawdling final hour of the evening when any music comes to the ears like a soothing lullaby. And when

they were done, Frances told them, lightly enough, that her plans had changed. She dwelt on the wearying of incessant practice and the annoyances of travel. The Macallisters accepted casually. They were too used to changing moods to wonder very much at Frances. Only Don, lifting himself from his deep chair, came to her and eyed her affectionately.

"You look awfully nice, to-night," he said, and swung her close to the amber circle of the tall lamp by the piano bench. Then he stood back a bit and regarded her with half-closed, intent eyes. "I've never seen you looking better, Franc."

"Rag. Disreputable," Frances murmured, but he did not hear.

"It's the most becoming dress you ever had," he said. "My wife's new gown," he explained to the Macallisters and stood beaming and utterly bewildered at the shout of laughter that went up about him.

CHAPTER XV

Of all the Macallisters it was Bobs who, during those late summer days, grew most dissatisfied with Janey. The others, perhaps, noticed no change, but to him the very qualities for which she stood in life became blurred for no reason that was very plain. As a disciplinarian, she was negligent, and he disapproved of that in spite of his own greater freedom. She was careless about his bed-hour and, nightly, he stayed up so late that he missed the early gardening which he had been used to take with her. He was even tardy at the breakfast table once or twice and Janey, dreamy-eyed behind the coffee-urn, said nothing. Apparently until she was recalled by a sharp comment from the Judge, she had not even *noticed*. As a companion, she was absent, given to perfunctory answers and infrequent plans. Their dual fishing excursions when Janey took a book and lay in the long grass while Bobs sported in the shallows and frightened away whatever fish approached, seemed things of the past. At first he had accepted the obvious explanation that the Macallisters kept her busy. But he became aware that she often sat, her slim hands folded idly in her lap and an air of abstraction about her as if she had always something very deep and still to ponder in her heart. Her eyes would look past his and a little quiver

of a smile would quirk the corners of her mouth. It was this obliviousness that irritated Bobs. Proudly he drew back, letting the rift widen within the lute until Janey should become aware of his aloofness and grim silences, and cry out in dismay. He pictured their reconciliation many times, and his own magnanimity. But it was maddeningly delayed.

Then one of those chances that so often change the current of life gave birth to an idea that sprang into being full-panoplied as from the forehead of Jove. The Macallisters adjourned from the dinner-table, leaving in the curious adult fashion, one uneaten piece of cake: an extra-large, toothsome piece, thickly coated with huge frosting. His eye on the disappearing backs of Alan and his father, Bobs politely stood aside for Alicia and Frances; stooped for the handkerchief that Mildred invariably dropped; remained alone for the brief instant before Martha swung open the pantry door, paused, with his mouth inconveniently full, to gaze from the dining-room window out over the kitchen garden; munched rapidly in the hall; wiped his hands down the side of his trouser leg as he crossed the living-room, and emerged upon the porch in the midst of an easy sentence from the Judge.

"... Three generations. In my grand-dad's time it was no more than a muddy trail across the prairie. I can remember sitting on the garden wall yonder and watching the prairie schooners headed west. I was Bobs' age when it was laid out a county road. And a year or so afterward the boys marched south along the Road to war. Every year since the city has crept out a little farther and the Road has grown a little

wider and more traveled. Fairfield will be a city suburb in another decade."

"They were riding those high-wheeled bicycles when I was a kid," Hugh said, "and making century runs past the gate. I used to wonder where they went. The Highway seemed endless, those days."

"I used never to be able to explain just where I came from," Alicia laughed. "Nobody knew Fairfield. But now—all I have to mention is that I live on the Highway and everybody places me at once, feeling that they have passed the house."

Bobs breathed a sigh of relief as he slipped into a chair a little behind the others, waiting quietly lest some one rise and harry him to his sweet repose. He never tired hearing of the Highway: that Road that, ribboning a continent, symbolizes in practical fashion both the romance and the tender memories that stay, unbidden, in the hearts of hurrying men. For each of the Macallisters it meant something different. To Hugh, it dipped away across the rolling hills to those cities on the sea from which stretched the whole world, with a fair, free path to every port and shore. To Don, who loved the hard beat of wind against his face, the Highway was a white temptation to speed; with the chance, as one drew farther away into the prairies of going faster and faster, farther than the most eager driver could wish. Alicia thought of it as the chance for some wondrous architect to fulfill his most glorious dreams. She could see it as a long line of beautiful houses across the continent: Dutch Colonial, perhaps, through Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio, where the traditions linger; long, low buildings suited

to the prairie spaces; log cabins and peaked roof chalet where the Highway wound among the mountains; bungalows, low-built and many-windowed, in the west. Even Bobs had his own dreams. He planned to travel the Highway some time, in a vehicle much like the prairie schooner of his great-grandfather, but with the speed of Don's own gray runabout, and to stop now and then, in likely places, to plant a clump of hollyhocks or valley lilies from the garden. But to look at the Highway as a Garden Road was a step beyond the others; for—

"Think how it will serve the uses of war," Alan said just then. "Bobs will see it sometime as the main artery of the country. Transportation, now—"

Bobs heard no more. His mind had caught at that "uses of war"; a game to play along the Highway. War. Troop supplies, marching armies, tanks, ambulances— No need to consider Janey there. No need for any beskirted companions. Just the Highway and a bunch of boys—

Above him their voices went on interminably. It was long past bedtime. Yet nothing had been said of bed to him. His eyes, growing heavy, drooped—and saw a curious thing. In the darkness Alan reached out and, behind his chair arm, took Janey's fingers in a clasp that was like a caress. Bobs alone saw it. And Bobs thought it—funny. He sat thoughtfully staring into the dark. Pondering.

With the morning, the incident had descended into a minor place beside the immediate possibilities which the Highway offered. The day stretched long before

him and somewhat irksome with its unceasing sunshine. It held the silence of late August: that sulky silence of furred and feathered things, weary of summer heat and impatiently waiting for the change into a golden and triumphant September. His pockets filled with cookies, Bobs emerged from the garden and contemplated the Highway at his feet for a long season. The last week of vacation lay heavy on his hands. He turned down the road, trudging past the stone cottage where Alan lived, past the Powell garden and into the yard beyond, where a tiny boy with a pointed chin and impish black eyes sat in a wheeled chair and angrily flapped the pages of a picture book.

"Ain't aunts the limit?" he scolded, as Bobs pressed a moist cookie into his hands and sprawled on the grass with an indescribable air of serious care. "Little Rollo books—like she had a hunderd years ago when she was young. Little *Rollo* books and ever'body talkin' submarines."

"H'm. Submarines." Bobs turned on his back and elevated his feet alternately to emphasize his points. "You couldn' use no submarines here on th' Highway. Tanks, now, 'r armored cars. Millions and billions of *them* marchin' across this here art'ry. You and me—drivin' along. Armored cars. Ha!" He sat up and sternly moved the wheel, his glance veering neither to left nor right. "Goin' awful fas'. Gotta get there before mornin', the ginerál says. Gotta get there. Honk—honk. Oo-ee." Rolfe's black eyes sparkled. The Little Rollo book was dragged off by a small pup and chewed contentedly under a syringa bush.

"Goin' awful fas'," he echoed.

"I esspec *you'd* be scared. I was jus' thinkin'—mebbe you'd be awful scared to go fas' in a armored car—"

"Pooh! Scared? I guess I got some sportin' blood— Pooh—"

"It would make a *good* armored car," Bobs announced after he had crawled in an admiring circle about the wheeled chair. "'F you wouldn' be scared. We could have some fun here on the Highway. Ever'body has fun there. They's the farmers' boys drivin' their trucks down t' th' milk train lickety split; and they's all the men goin' to Town; and them little cars that go by so fas' an'—"

"Ever'body has fun ever'where but cripples." The pointed chin quivered and the discontented voice seemed caught in a rising mesh of tears. "Cripples are pestered so—makin' you eat custards you hate. Sittin'—times is awful humdrum for cripples."

"I could eat your custards up," Bobs suggested kindly, "if your mother didn't know. 'F you would play armored car—" He raised himself cautiously on his elbow and peered about him. Then he inquired in a voice carefully drained of all interest. "Have you seen Amy Powell anywhere around here?"

As if in answer to his question one long, black-stockinged leg pushed through the hedge, presently to be followed by the succeeding members of that demure child, who advanced gravely toward them. Bobs beckoned her to hurry.

"I gotta scheme," he said.

"Your ol' schemes." Amy smiled with the indulgent world-weariness of the aged. But as Bobs unfolded

the new game which was to be played the rest of the summer, she registered interest in spite of herself.

"My Auntie Marcia's got a wheeled chair. And I shall be doctor in charge of a whole hospital." Bobs regarded her reflectively.

"I dunno about that. I dunno's I want any women doctors to my army."

"'N' I could prob'ly arrange for getting Colonel Van Sicklen's. But of course—"

"I'd thought about the Colonel's," Bobs said grudgingly. "Only he's so awful apt to swear, and Peter's the snuffy kind when things don't go jus' so easy."

Amy assumed an air of bland absorption in an ant traveling a blade of grass. She gave Bobs something less than her profile. It was an attitude that enraged him.

"Looky here, Amy Powell. This is my scheme, I guess."

"Is it?"

"I planned it out, I guess. All this morning I been planning. 'N' my father seen this Highway get to be a Highway right from the top of his own garden-wall. Now. I c'n play armies with one wheeled chair 'n' no doctors atall. Now."

Amy leaned forward to Rolfe, coldly oblivious of his other guest.

"They're making chocolate cake at my gramma's this morning. If y'should come over to play this afternoon—"

"I s'pose. Chocolate cake. Chocolate cake. I s'pose." But for all his sneering, Bobs was troubled. A general, remembering that it was woman's wit that

defeated Samson, the strongest man in Israel, might have turned instinctively to such diplomacy.

"Could you ask your Auntie, Amy, to let us take her chair?"

"She'll let me."

"Betcha billion dollars."

But Amy was a cautious soul even with minor wagers. She slipped through the hedge without reply and after a period of impatient waiting for Bobs, returned via the front gate, slowly.

"She says we're welcome. Only it'd be more to th' point to be Red Crossers."

"Armored cars," Bobs held out defiantly.

"Red Crossers," Amy said again, her eyes wide with thought. "She's sending a note t' th' Colonel."

"She is—" Bobs lost a moment in contemplation of his astounding luck and Amy, the astute, assumed control.

"It's arranged. Peter can wheel Rolfe. An' you may have the Colonel an' lead. You're to be at our gate at four. I shall take my Auntie myself. I'm carefulest of any of you and I can run just as fast."

Debatable as the question might be under ordinary circumstances, his army's fortune depended too wholly on Amy's gift of tact to risk argument. With the renunciation possible to great spirits who see the good of the Cause, Bobs yielded leadership silently and with but the slightest show of reluctance. As a Macallister he was accustomed to capable women.

He was somewhat shocked, nevertheless, when, on arriving at the rendezvous, he found both Marcia Powell and the Colonel occupying to the full their armored

cars. Marcia carried a small flag. The Colonel, his thin, cherry-red cheeks wind-dried and wrinkled, sat stiffly, his eyes glinting from beneath his broad hat. Peter, a shock-headed, obedient-looking boy, was winding bunting about the handle of his car. Puzzled and enraged at this turn of things, Bobs took Amy aside.

"They're grown-up," he announced as if he were revealing an alien biologic species.

"'N' they both say th' only thing worries *them* is can we go fas' enough to suit 'em."

"You knew it"—*Et tu, Brute* could have been no more sad—"all the time."

"They *want* to play, same as Rolfe. My Auntie Marcia says it isn' ever'body can have real cripples playin' war."

Baffled, Bobs took up the burden of the game that all at once had grown so heavy on his hands. He recognized it as a Frankenstein of his own dreaming and he knew the Macallister habit of fastening any unexpected happening on his shoulders. He never pretended to understand the vagaries of grown-ups. His own family were completely beyond him. There was no use to try to fathom such exotic minds as Marcia Powell's and the Colonel's.

His worry lessened as they trudged down the Highway, drowsy in the mellow mid-afternoon. The western sunlight, raining unobstructed across the meadows, here checkered the dusty road with leaf shadows and flung dancing lights against the stone wall. Great canopies of white cloud lifted in the blue; a warm south wind blew in his face and stirred the leaves of the trees above him. Gradually the inner vision took its

hold. Far ahead the Van Sicklen boy pushed Rolfe jerkily, exhaling melody from a battered mouth organ. To Bobs, bringing up the rear, at the distance appointed between them, the shrill notes were heroic strains. He did not even know when he passed the Macallister gate nor feel, warningly, the concentrated family gaze that followed him. His face lifted. He was marching to the rhythm of tramping thousands—"We are coming, Father Abraham," the Colonel hummed like a great drowsy bee—their feet marking the measure of the song down the white Highway: rank on rank, gloriously strong and eager, gallant young faces lifted, banners streaming against the sky.

Through Amy's crisp directions on the hilltop, he moved as one whom a dream hath possessed. He swept the horizon line with shaded eyes. Puffs of gray smoke hung just above the line of green on the earth's rim. Far away, garlands of shrapnel cloud shook themselves out and floated in the blue. A drifting shadow over distant fields gave warning of an advancing plane. His ears caught the very detonation of far-off guns. In silence their cars were stripped of armored bearings and made ready for their wounded. They were evened to the line of departure—and then, out of the murk of battle, they swept together—those white cars with their emblazoned crimson crosses, dashing fearlessly along the open Road on mercy's errand.

But somewhere, in that thirty yards that topped the hill, the dream vanished. Somewhere, once that first mad drive was over, Bobs found that he had been metamorphosed from an insouciant dare-devil of a driver to a badly frightened little boy. The queer

independence of the wheeled chair, punging along the smooth pavement, terrified him. The sulphurisms, pouring forth in a monotonous undertone from the Colonel's lips who had braced himself in, handily, with his cane, wracked his nerves. He had started at a round pace and discovered presently that his feet were traveling faster than he thought possible. The smooth hill seemed to have gripped their soles and he moved as if in a treadmill. There was no sound. Peter had stopped his music. Amy was strangely quiet like himself. Only Rolfe Bradley shrieked gladly, his cries rising like a Comanche's on the still air.

Vainly Bobs strove to slow his running feet. But he went on, his hands convulsively gripped about the chair's bar. The sickening knowledge came to him that he must run on—unless some horrible accident intervened—to the very bottom of the slope, and jump and quiver inwardly before his Maker every time the Colonel swore. He could only send them both down that new descent into Avernus as safely as the gods permitted. It stretched before him blindingly sunny, wide, smooth, endless.

Thirty rods from its base, the hill dipped acutely. That was the possible point of danger. He recognized its approach and wondered if Amy would know, as he did, that they must brace themselves for the dip. There was no chance to speak. Even if he could have framed coherent words, his breath would have failed him. He was a little ahead of the others, and he knew that he could not stop whatever crash sounded behind him. The treadmill held him too securely. He could only hear. From the sound of running feet, that he

strained to catch, he reckoned Amy close at his heels, but he dared not look behind. Ahead, sprung from the very earth, a fringe of blurred figures strung themselves across the road opposite the Macallister gate. Two started toward him on a run, up the incline. Despair in his heart, he knew that he was over the dip. The chair jerked downward on his aching arms and his feet ran a still swifter pace. Seconds became eons in that tense silence. They must have followed. They must have come over the dip—plunged safely. There had been no—crash. In a moment his throat went dry and his breath came in hoarse gasps.

The next, he was facing Janey across an abysmal silence. He faced Janey only, although he was aware that there were others there, too—Alicia, Mildred, the Judge. Don and Alan loomed shadow-like on either side, strong hands on the chair-bar. Their rigid silence became, with the passing of time, too terrifying to break. Their eyes, regarding him sternly, had a waiting look. After some ten thousand years Rolfe Bradley, quite still now, curved triumphantly into the circle, Peter panting behind him. Amy and Marcia Powell came to a stop under Hugh's hand. Still no one spoke. After a time, Bobs' emotions lost something of terror and took on bewilderment. He shifted his glance upward from Janey's slipper. It was an exceedingly curious silence. Amy's hat had slipped down and was held only by its elastic; she had a curl over her shoulder and seemed absorbed in its fine twisting about her finger. There was a fleeting look of amusement at the corners of Miss Marcia's mouth. The Colonel was

gazing interestedly at the tree-tops. Rolfe Bradley yawned.

The Judge drew a long breath.

"Robin—" There was a note in that stern voice that Bobs had never heard before. He felt, as he had felt many times, that he did not know his father very well. He seemed tremendously old and patriarchal, much older than the Colonel. And how does one explain matters to the aged? There was no help to be had from the family. Alicia looked absolutely frozen. Even Janey's eyes wavered away from his. He rolled the Colonel's chair back and forth, marking a serpentine trail in the dust of the Highway—grew absorbed in that. Against his own better judgment he had played with women. Now—as usual—he must bear the consequences in silence.

"No harm done, is there?" The Colonel interposed testily. "No harm done, Douglas, is there? Answer me that? Is there? Well, then—"

"By the grace of God, sir, no harm done. No."

"Everything's said then. That's all. Let it go at that. Don't blame the lad."

"Don't blame—do you know the incline of that hill, Van Sicklen?"

"I do not," roared the Colonel. "And I care less than that. If you've a drop of sporting blood—"

"It's the incredible cruelty of the thing," Judge Macallister cut him short. "It's more than thoughtlessness. It's—base. A son of mine subjecting people like you and Marcia Powell to danger like that. Robin—"

"Aw—f'rgit it," Rolfe Bradley broke in with customary impatience at the timidity of the adult mind. "We was playin' armies and ambilances—"

"Like Alan said las' night," Bobs explained eagerly, now that there was some opportunity for really clear elucidation. "Armored cars drivin' on the Highway—and war—an' armies. An' I tol' Rolfe and Rolfe, he says this was awful humdrum times f'r cripples. Cripples is pestered so, he says. An' Amy says no, not armored cars, we'd be Red Crossers takin' wounded to th' hospital 'cause wasn't that kinder? An' ever' one o' these here ambilances is ball-bearin'—"

"You understand, don't you, Judge Macallister?" Marcia took up the explanation in her soft, amused voice. "That we planned the play—" It was a statement that galvanized the Macallisters into rigid attention.

"Self-bidden, Marcia?"

"Do you mean—?"

"You permitted this?" The Judge stepped closer. "You gave yourselves over to these children willingly?"

"My very soul!" The Colonel snorted and thumped mightily upon the pavement with his cane. "Is it so paralyzing? I tell you when a man's raced his own horses and ridden to hounds and—fought, sir; and there's nothing left him but to sit eternally in the sun and have people—perfectly well people—ask him in a half-dead voice how he's feeling to-day—'humdrum times,' indeed."

"Times *is* humdrum," Rolfe's black eyes clouded, and he looked piteously at Janey. "Ever'thin' on the Highway goin' fas' as greased lightenin'."

"There is nothing surer-footed than a child," Marcia said again. "The Road is perfectly level. You see you have the limitations of the splendidly well, you Macallisters. It's a frightfully meager understanding. *You* don't know what the intoxication of speed means."

"But, Marcia—if something had happened?"

Marcia turned her hands palm upward on the chair arm. Her mouth wore its half-amused smile. Even Bobs, watching her gratefully, comprehended something of the indefinable fatalism of her attitude; and became, at the same moment, aware of the change in the circle of faces about him, as if a suppressed quiver had passed across them and changed, in passing, into tenderness. They laughed a little but it was low laughter and not quite as if they were amused. Hugh spoke low to Marcia and turned away, pushing her chair about. Alicia drew a little nearer her father and Mildred slipped her hand into the crook of his elbow. At the corners of the Judge's eyes tiny, humorous twinkles appeared, deepening their kindly smile. And on the principle by which an Indian boy is apt to lose all his stoicism when the final test of kindness takes the place of the torture that prepares him for manhood, Bobs knew that his endurance was at an end; and from very force of habit, he turned to Janey.

At that moment, Janey, who had always been the first to see his need and comfort him, was turning away. There seemed a suggestion of oblivion about her as if he did not greatly matter in her world. With a pang, Bobs saw her hand swing outward and touch Alan's softly. It might have been accidental, except that a tinge of red crept up beneath the pleasant, even tan of

Alan's face, and a smile touching the corners of his mouth reflected the dreamy happiness in Janey's tell-tale eyes.

The futility of existence overwhelmed Robin Macallister. He had no intention of crying. Of all the ways in which a man may take dismissal from the supreme place in the affections of a loved lady, that seemed the most humiliating; and there beside him was the minx, Amy, capable of eternal memory for his weakness. But the grief and rage that were in him and the remnant of his shaking fear rose to his throat and set his lips to twitching. With a sob that began as an unsuccessful cough, he loosed his hold on the Colonel's old chair and tried to slip away. Then Janey, blundering, tried to stop him.

"Honey," she said, her slim hand on his shoulder, "what is it? Nobody blames you now. So long as Marcia and the Colonel wanted to play, everything is all right."

The tender undernote in her voice was the last straw. It enraged him, to stand there, struggling with tears. He squirmed angrily from her hands.

"It's y-you — you." He gulped tumultuously. "Y-you make m-me t-tired. You m-make me a-ashamed. Wh-whatcha doin', anyways? Tryin' t' land Alan?"

"Oh, my grief," Janey said in exasperation rather than dismay, Bobs noted. She flung up her chin with an air of reckless unconcern. "I landed him long ago. What I've been doing is trying not to tell it."

"And serves you right, m' dear," Alan's amused voice added. "Old Dame Destiny giving you an an-

nouncement party in the middle of a trans-continental Highway. If we must make public our affairs—”

It tidied over the moment of the Macallister's first amazement. Hugh, turning back, reached Janey with a long stride, his hands gripping theirs with a clasp that took the place of words. Alicia was the first to speak, albeit her remarks were of small value save as exclamation points to Mildred's rounded congratulations. The Judge was less voluble. Of them all he had a sudden, sobering sense of loss. Even Janey's hand in his, as they bore her through the garden gate, was not wholly comforting. He dropped behind the others and found himself beside Bobs, and presently his hand stole toward the boy's shoulders, slipped about them, rested there. Years, yet, before him—with Bobs. A Benjamin was left to his old age. They turned into the garden and strolled silently along the path to that old marble seat that Dale Macallister had put in the angle of the wall because it reminded her of starlit nights in Italy when life was just beginning. His glance rested for a moment on a bed of petunias gleaming delicately against the gray wall.

“Your mother planned that, Bobs,” he said suddenly. “Petunias just there—”

“She liked flowers, didn't she?” Bobs said as shyly. “Awful well, she liked a garden.”

“Yes, she did. She could make anything grow—”

“I could too. I like 'em. You know, I gotta scheme—”

He began telling his father his dream of a Garden-Highway blossoming gloriously across a continent.

CHAPTER XVI

THREE days later Mildred's telegram arrived. In the first few minutes of the situation which Bobs' impetuous accusations brought down upon her, Janey had remembered that it might hold an element of embarrassment for Mildred. Afterward, she could recall nothing except that her sister's good wishes were adequate, and delivered with quite the air of smooth insouciance that she had taught them to expect from her. Their import drifting in with the others was lost in the flood-tide of general rejoicing.

There could be no doubt of the Macallisters' astonishment. It was bewildering that Alan Campbell, known to a wider world than any of themselves, should appear so unmistakably triumphant over the acceptance of an obscure and unobtrusive Janey, as if her winning had been a difficult and wonderful achievement. And because they could not hide such amazement, they cleverly exaggerated it, turning surprise into an impromptu and hilarious festivity.

Janey, hustled into the Pink Gown which the Portrait had made famous, came down to find her chair and Alan's placed side by side at the head of the long table, and wreathed with myrtle. The garden had been rifled for huge bouquets; the daintiest morsels were chosen for them and proffered solemnly; they ad-

dressed Janey with the utmost deference; they toasted them again and again with friendly mockery. Afterward, Hugh insisted on a ceremonious visit to Great-Aunt Medora, twenty miles down the river, and accomplished it for the Macallisters en masse, pushing a blushing, laughing Janey in upon her for her delighted and frank congratulations, parading Alan for her long-netted inspection, sweeping them both away again for a ride home that seemed swifter than the flight of swallows.

Even then their exultant energy had not diminished. Back at the Lodge, they lighted the tall lamp beside the piano, and put Janey where its amber glow would light the ivory of her rapid hands and bring out the bronze flecks in her hair, and sang. Songs, they chose, that have been worn with the years; vagrant verses that have something elemental in them, earth and fire and air and water woven in their essence. They sang them softly to the tunes that Dale Macallister had drawn from her own happy days: "Come, live with me and be my love;" "My true love hath my heart and I have his;" "The Braes o' Balquither;" and then, half-laughing, since it suited their humor of that night, Hugh himself took the bench and swept them all out on a lilting, lusty chorus.

Over the mountains
And under the waves,
Over the fountains
And under the graves,
Under floods which are deepest,
Which Neptune obey,
Over rocks which are steepest,
Love will find out the way.

There is no striving
To cross his intent;
There is no contriving
His plots to prevent.
But if once the message greet him
That his true love doth stay,
Though Death should come and meet him
Love will find out the way.

Through it all Mildred had laughed and Mildred had sung with the rest. Not by the slightest sign did she betray memory of the gossip, linking Janey's name with Stephen's, which she had set in circulation. If she felt disconcertion, no flicker of an eyelash revealed it. But, on a blazing Sunday morning, with everybody late for everything, she exhibited her telegram. She did not explain it. It arrived when they were at the breakfast table and the Macallisters saw her read it unconcernedly, crush it between her palms and toss it aside without an inquiry. Telegrams were not unusual. Whatever possible curiosity they may have felt about this one was dulled to complete inertia by the heat.

Janey thought of it once, on her way to church, but only passingly. For Alan was beside her, and it was something of an adventure to walk with him down the wide, tree-lined streets, wearing his ring upon her finger for all the world to see. She sat beside him in the back pew of the little stone church where, with a turn of her head, she could look out the open door across a shadow-checked green to the white Road. Again and again she felt herself swung toward it, irresistibly. She became acutely conscious of it as the symbolism of the life that was to be hers with this vigorous man whose career was the following of white

Roads that dipped beyond the hills. As the final hymn died away, she felt his hand close over hers, its grasp tightening about her slim fingers. It was a hymn of dedication and she tried to say a prayer that God might reasonably suppose to be a consecration of her life, but she could not get beyond an unworded, happy lifting of the spirit. Five minutes after, they had come out of the church into a group of smiling, friendly faces and lingered, perforce, to speak with one after another whose good wishes welled up from the depths of kindness only to be found in a little town. Old monitors of Fairfield, Mrs. Whitby, Mrs. Wakefield, Mrs. Larkin, bustled about her complacently as if at last she had achieved a destiny worthy of their praise. The boys and girls who had been in her classes smiled at her shyly and studied Alan with wide, unabashed eyes. The younger matrons of her own era welcomed her anew as if, affianced, she were an initiate in the freemasonry of marriage. They passed from group to group as they walked out the Highway, walking a little with this neighbor or that, who joined them and lingered to talk under the trees before they turned off into some quiet, shady street. Janey did not remember the telegram again until Mildred mentioned it casually, as they sat after luncheon in the shade of the screened porch.

"I'm leaving you-all in a couple of days," she announced, taking advantage of a lull that only the heat had produced. "This little pig goes to market—"

"Back to New York?"

"I've been expecting it. Simonds is taking me on—interior decorating, if you must know. You're all so

energetic, it's made me quite humble. I pine to be on my own."

"We'll all be going in another month."

"Horrid bore," Mildred admitted. "But it's only a few weeks. It's September already. School begins here this week, although I take it there's little enough to interest the Macallisters in *that*," she added with faint mockery.

"Nothing," asserted Alan promptly. "I never felt quite so indifferent toward the progress of knowledge among the younger generation in my life. Will you be coming back?" It was a provocative question. Mildred eyed him gravely.

"Soon?" she asked.

"Deo volente," Alan told her.

"Thanksgiving," Janey said. Alan made an impatient movement.

"Delay," he grumbled. "And delay, once you are sure of the girl, has always seemed to me the most senseless thing in the world."

"There you are," Mildred informed him with an air of sadness, "plunging headlong into you know not what. And I—here am I—one would think a sufficient example—beating against the bars of the law—" They all knew she was speaking of the divorce that she had given them tacitly to understand was to be the event of the fall. She had never explained it. And now, sitting in the swing, her hands idle, her slim feet crossed and touching the floor now and then, it seemed as if nothing more unconcerned, more free from vexatious care could be imagined. Apparently, whatever sorrow life with Drury Pennell had brought her sat

upon her lightly. From the heights of her own happiness, Janey looked down at her and wondered. Mildred was yawning with the frankness of a charming, drowsy child.

"Sleepy," she murmured. "You're none too bright this afternoon. You'll be better company of the likes of me, when the sun is down."

Fifteen minutes later Janey went slowly up the stairs and knocked at the door of Mildred's room. Something, shrink as she might from that light jeering, had sent her as surely as she would have gone to Bobs, guessing at a hidden trouble. Perhaps it was the peace that had stolen over her that morning in the little stone church; or perhaps it was a new courage that joy had given her. She had her moment of dismay at the sound of Mildred's voice, clear and cool, bidding her enter. But once she had actually opened the door, even that left her. The room was shadowed, golden-walled, darkened behind drawn curtains. A jar of yellow lilies stood on the floor beside the dressing table, their color reflected faintly in the polished floor. Mildred herself sat in an armed wicker chair, her back to the window. She was, apparently, doing nothing.

"I thought you might not be asleep," Janey said simply, sitting down at the foot of the bed. "I can't think things are really right—it's none of my affair, you'll say, but I wanted to ask you, straight out, about that telegram."

"Old stuff, wasn't it?" Mildred admitted with astonishing suddenness. "I had my own doubts about putting that little bluff across. Hand me that buffer, will you, Janey?"

"Then why use it?" Janey blurted. "Surely you—"

"Why not? I'm not mad about staying—with nobody to play around with me. Wouldn't you say—for me—the situation was a bit—awkward?"

"Not Alan?"

"Alan? Hardly. He hasn't even guessed the hunter's bow was strung."

"It isn't as if you cared for Alan—" she flushed and flung up her chin as she took the plunge. "As—as I care about him."

"Heavens above," Mildred called her witness languidly. "I can't imagine *caring* for Alan—"

"Because you never really cared for any one in your life but Dru," Janey went on, probing. Not a quiver passed across Mildred's half-smiling lips. She tilted her smooth head and examined the nail that was approaching a brilliant polish.

"And as for Alan," she resumed, as if she were continuing her latest sentence without interruption, "he hasn't had an idea there was any possibility of choice. I didn't know he was considering you, Janey; but I was quite aware that he wasn't even thinking of me. It's all the most natural in the course of human events. Men flirt with clever women. They don't marry them."

Janey hunched forward, her elbows on her knees, much in the attitude of a feminine Thinker. She knew that Mildred was, for some queer reason, being generous. It would have been so easy to hint at Alan's interest through the long weeks of that summer; so easy that a lesser woman could hardly have escaped it.

"I wish you'd—stay," Janey said. "If you don't have to go away—and you don't—I wish you would

stay. Until things straighten out for you. Something was wrong—has been wrong all the summer. You aren't like yourself. You used to be—exultant."

"Absurd, I've been. Of course. One must go through those stages."

"Mildred!"

"Shocked, aren't you? Shocked and pained. You'll learn, sweet one. One of the great axioms of matrimony is that the lives of all human pairs run parallel, never meeting even in infinity."

"I suppose," Janey argued slowly, "that you've rattled that off so many times, it sounds right to you." She emphasized the "you." Mildred laughed lightly. For all her air of frankness her reticence shielded her like an impalpable armor.

"Every human experience promises—everything. Else we'd stop short the moment we were out of childhood. Every experience is a new beginning—but once you've pushed on to meet it—"

"Aren't any of the promises fulfilled? Not any, Mildred? Love? Happiness? Success?"

"The three of them answer about all our mortal dreams?" Mildred chose to consider that, frowning over her pink, polished nails. "Let me think. Success? Success is never recognizable, I think. You never feel successful, however people talk of it. There's always something that hangs out its promise just ahead. And you push on. Happiness, too. It never seems real. You tear along with the crowd and whoop loudly now and then. But that's all. It's exciting just at first, of course. Only—nothing big happens. Nothing is ever real, even with love. And all the while you

feel pledged, somehow, to carry some degree of responsibility for the fulfillment of *that* promise. Not worth while—any of it.” She shook her head and spoke half aloud as if she no longer thought of Janey but of a shadowy self at her side. Her lips were curved in a faint smile; her voice was as light as if she were only jesting. “Not worth while.”

“I’m—sorry,” Janey said quietly. She slipped off the bed and stood in the center of the room, her hands clasped behind her. “There wasn’t anybody, ever, who wanted to be happy more than you—and Dru. I used to think you never could be anything but glad. And you were so clever—”

Something in Mildred’s hard gayety gave way at that. It was as if that surface brightness disappeared like varnish wrinkling and cracking under acid. She flung Janey a slow, scornful smile.

“Yes. I’m clever. Cleverness is my—stock in trade. Sometimes I think that I’ve managed to poison every good thing God gave me to enjoy with that cleverness of mine. And all I wanted was to be happy. Nobody ever wanted it more. Nobody ever tried harder to find the way. And all the time I had it there between my hands; to drop and smash to bits and leave behind. I wish you’d go downstairs, Janey. I’m going to be sorry for this.”

“It wasn’t love,” Janey asked with a sudden intuition. “It wasn’t love that failed you, then?”

The brown eyes filled pitifully with tears. Mildred’s hand stole upward to her throat.

“It was I,” she said, barely above a whisper. “I failed myself.”

There seemed no reply that Janey could make to that. Presently, she found herself in the hall beyond Mildred's shut door, though she could not have told just how she had retreated from that shadowy, golden room. The horrible thing was that she could not go back, even when the sound of muffled sobs came to her through the thick, oaken door. Mildred had shut her out, quite definitely. She might understand, if she would, the pain that moved underneath that light air of mockery, but she was as helpless before it as she had been when she knew nothing. She could not still it. Yet the knowledge of it hurt her. She wished that she had let Mildred go without trying to come to grips with facts; for Janey unconsciously had something of the Macallister quality of aloofness; the clinging to the impersonal as a defense against awkward situations.

There seemed nothing that she could do. Those brief self-accusations were all she had to indicate the many things that had happened in the five years they covered. Janey could reason out details; could imagine the young lovers, ignorant of themselves but critical, since each was so important to the other, caught up bewilderingly into a dashing set which had the means to make its city very charming to talented newcomers. They had had happiness between their hands, Mildred had said. Now, there were a thousand mischances piled between them—old quarrels, silences, misunderstandings, cynicisms, ridicule, the open break, the final acknowledgment of failure, these months of separation. Dru had made no sign, sent no word; and his mother, in her great solitary house on the Row, had ignored her son's wife utterly. Mildred, sensing Drury's bit-

terness behind, had made light of that. Mildred had made light of many things and, all the while, this pain underneath. It was that for which Janey grieved. But there was nothing to be done unless one stepped beyond the utmost bounds and risked humiliation, not of the Macallister pride alone, but Mildred's.

The next day it rained: a cold, steady downpour that beat the nasturtiums and petunias flat in muddy puddles and swept across the meadows in a gray, misty veil through which the trees peered, shivering. The river overflowed its narrow banks and slid uneasily among the brown grasses, growing over its edge. Water foamed in a yellow welter along the Highway and the garden path. The Macallisters welcomed the rain. They stayed indoors gayly, in a house that seemed the more quiet for the wind and the rattle of black rain outside. They played interminable games of billiards, made up a table for duplicate bridge, dipped into the magazines that came in the morning's mail. At luncheon, the subject of Mildred's leaving came up suddenly, evoking a swift rush of urgings that she stay a little longer—a fortnight, a week, three days. And Mildred, agreeing amusedly that no portion of the sky would fall for her waiting, promised not to go until Saturday. Janey, hearing that and catching the glance that Mildred gave her as she promised, breathed more easily as if a respite had been granted. All through the afternoon, while she sat writing letters in her own room and the Macallisters followed their individual devices, she had a sense of wordless praying that some new chance might intervene, that events would crowd those six days and make them easier, that some incident

would point a way. And always afterward, Janey remembered that silent petition and that afternoon as the way in which answer to prayer sometimes comes.

She had stamped and addressed her envelopes and changed her gown for dinner, when there was a hurried knock at her door and almost before her "yes" was spoken, Hugh pushed it open.

"Marcia," he said, hurriedly. "I've been there four hours, now; and she won't let me see her. She's sent for you."

"What is it, Hugh? Is it—"

"Just a bad afternoon, they say. Usual. Not—infrequent." He drew a long, shuddering breath. His big hand was shaking, and he held it up for her to see. "It's always been as steady as a rock," he said.

"You haven't known—" Janey answered. "It's just that you've been away."

"I've been away." He said it bitterly. "It's hard to think it. And to-day—she wouldn't let me see her, not one moment— Perfectly well and strong I was—outside. Sittin' easy; with Marcia goin' through—agony, like that."

There were evidences of that pain. Her face showed the ravages of the afternoon in the narrowing of the drooping lids, the tight compression of her lips, the deep-drawn lines that ran from nostril to mouth. But she smiled as Janey slipped through the door and came toward her.

"Wanted you," she said in a whisper. "In an hour or two, the Thing may come back and catch me up again. And I want to talk to some one—"

"Is it the old pain, Marcia?"

A faint shiver passed through her half-recumbent form. Her thin hand reached out and slipped into Janey's.

"Pain," she said softly, "and I'm such a coward. I go into a blue funk at the promise of it. I've wondered, often, what I should have done if I had lived in Inquisition times and had to choose between pain and my own faith. I should have recanted everything, I expect—gone back on God entirely and trusted God to understand." She smiled faintly and motioned to a low chair. "I can stand this," she added with an unforced cheeriness. "I know, even when it's worst, that it will be over pretty soon now."

"Another operation, Marcia? Are you going to have that?"

Marcia did not answer. She turned her head and looked out of the wide window beside her couch across the green, wet lawn. The rain had dissolved into mist, leaving a trail of vapor floating in the still air and graying the trees, powdered with rain-spray. There was a break in the dun, western sky, and the sunset came through. A shaft of light lay across the wall and Marcia followed it with half-smiling eyes. Suddenly Janey understood. Her lips parted and she stared incredulously at the slender figure, lying with such seeming lightness among her pillows. Marcia had seemed anything but ill of late. The weakness that left her limp and white, sometimes, when they were there; the increasingly frequent occasions when they had been banished from the cottage because Marcia wanted rest, had seemed natural enough considering the summer heat and the continual excitement that fol-

lowed wherever the Macallisters went. "She will be better in the fall," they had said easily among themselves, in response to Hugh's tacit eagerness for reassurance. The Fear that gripped him became but a momentary despondency before such reasonableness. It had such a ring of cheery certainty. "She will be better surely, in the fall." Marcia herself assented to that when they went back to the wide, vine-hung porch, and found her gay again, among the rose-colored cushions of her long chair, with the pink glow of the lamp on her cheeks or the little rose-colored fan that Hugh had sent her shading her face from the light. How much, Janey wondered, had those brave, silken things done toward their deception? Her eyelids closed against the stinging tears. A moment later she was recalled by a flicker of irritation in Marcia's voice.

"Don't be a goose, Janey. There's such a little time—and a lot I want to say."

Janey steadied her lips between her teeth.

"How long?" she asked.

"There you are, honey. It can be done, you see. How long? I hope—soon. But the doctors say three months—six months—perhaps a year to wait. One doesn't know. One's honor bound to stand it as long—"

"Marcia, how can you? How *can* you?"

The thin fingers closed gently about Janey's. The calm voice came to her ears, low and very steady.

"Let's talk it out. That's why I sent for you. I wish you Macallister's *would*. Not eternally cover up the things you mean with your laughter and the latest thing in art. Let's talk it out, honey. You remember

that little poem you read me in the spring? You and your poetry—whatever should I have done without you?”

“I am the Dark Cavalier?” Janey asked, and at Marcia’s nod, she went on:

“ . . . I am the Last Lover.
My arms shall hold you, when other arms are tired.
I stand to wait for you, patient in the darkness,
Offering forgetfulness of all that you desired.”

But she could not finish. It was Marcia herself, eyes closed, who took up the vagrant little verse, happily,

“I ask no merriment, no pretense of gladness;
I can love heavy lids and lips without their rose.
Though you are sorrowful, you will not weary me—
I will not go from you, though all the tired world goes.

It’s been coming ten years. Long ago, just at the first, Doctor Bunce told me that no human being came down to the threshold and was not glad to have the Door open. He was an old man then, and he had seen so many—go; and every one so gladly. Curious, isn’t it, remembering how we are afraid, always? You can’t understand, perhaps. You’re just growing passionately alive. But it’s true. I’ve been learning—You greet Death cheerily like a true friend.”

“But—if things went more quietly, Marcia? If you were very careful—”

“You’re thinking of that wheeled-chair race? Listen. That Door there swinging open ahead, means release to me and—rest and—if you will—‘forgetfulness of all that you desired.’ But while I live I’m desirous.

I'm a greedy, greedy thing, Janey; snatching at every moment. There will be times enough—"

"Does Hugh suspect?"

"I—don't know. That's why I sent for you, really. I can't seem to manage—Hugh." She smiled a little. "You see he keeps insisting that I—he wants to marry me. Me," she added with an infinitude of accent. Janey frowned in a puzzled doubtfulness. She had the wish always to reach the heart of a matter and she was, just then, remembering Alan.

"And don't you—care any more?"

"Care!" The tearing wistfulness in the word left Janey shaken. "Ever since I can remember, when we used to play together like Amy and Bobs. If you knew just what I felt about his big, steady hands, Janey—" she broke off and laughed shakily. "But I'm vain. Natural human vanity, I have. When I think what I am, sometimes—I've tried so hard to be gay this summer with my rose-colored pillows and my fine pink fan. I can manage part of every day—with care. I can be almost what I was—once. But if Hugh were here—oh, there are hours on hours when I'm not gay. I don't care how I look, or what I say. I—can't. And after the pain has gone, I'm—dulled. He'd always remember that. There'd always be that shadow on him, if he had his way."

It seemed to Janey that she could bear no more. She was past tears. She could not have cried, now, but she trembled inwardly with the hurt of Marcia's understanding. The quiet self-abnegation that, seeking in the brief tenure she had on life all the happiness that could be hers in the time that remained, and re-

linquishing the brimming cup, lest Hugh find the lees too bitter. The shadows were lengthening and a smoky twilight closed about the house and filtered through the quiet room. Outside, in the last faint glow of the sunset, a thrush was singing as if in him the evening had found voice after a still day of rain. Janey raised her head and met Marcia's straight look.

"What is it that you want me to do?" she asked quietly.

"It's Hugh," Marcia said. "I rather think he's going to need you, Janey."

Janey shook her head.

"Not that, Marcia. They don't need me, any of them. They're far too—"

"Hugh needs you. All of them. They need you terribly. They don't value—happiness enough. They're modern. And they're afraid to speak out; to love and show love. It is all so necessary, because time passes so soon and then the chance is gone. You've the very gift of happiness, Janey. Alicia has her great talent, and Mildred her cleverness, and Don and Hugh their successes. But you are the one they'll have to turn to. Can't you see that?"

Mingled with the sound of Marcia's low, steady voice, there came to Janey the memory of two more: Mildred's with its light note broken, "It was I—I failed myself. All the time I had happiness between my two hands—to drop and smash to bits and leave behind," and hard on the heels of that, the bitterness in Hugh's self-condemnation. "Yes, I've been away—and Marcia going through agony like that." It was there only that Marcia's understanding failed. She could not guess

what scorching memories of failure and regret Hugh would carry with him, if he slipped away and let her traverse the Valley alone. After all, it was easier for a woman who could say "care" as Marcia had, to keep the truth from the man she loved and to pass through the Door alone. But was she making it easier for Hugh? Would not Hugh, with that latent bitterness already tinging his thought, echo what Mildred had said, "It was I—I failed myself"? If it were Alan in Marcia's place. Janey's mouth quivered at the thought of that, but she held herself to facing it. If it were Alan and they could have a year or less—a year with its certain pain and knowledge of parting—but without the darkness of grief if one summoned a steady courage to face what was to come—a year, too, that would hold innumerable joys watched for, snatched from the passing days; a year that bore the glow of rich, warm, tender loving— If it were Alan, she knew that she would take that year like a gift from a great and tender God.

And then they all became inextricably mingled in her thought: Mildred and Drury Pennell; Don and Frances; Alan and herself; Hugh and Marcia; each of them risking for some foolish petty qualm or pride a part of the power and the glory of life. Sacrifice became as worthless as pride or ambition, all of them baubles to be thrown away when one grasped the real. "To love and show love." It was the simplest of directions for the finding of happiness. And the happiness of them all seemed to lie like a tangled skein in the hollow of her own hand, waiting for some one's patient fingers to unsnarl the threads. "To speak out—time passes

so soon and the chance is gone." It was then that the last of her diffidence and shyness before the Mac-allisters dropped away. She had long since grown from dull inertia into a passionate and tingling love of living; her very buoyancy had conquered the old sensitiveness; but for the first time she was sounding the deeps of that inner strength from which she was to draw, day after day, unfalteringly. She, too, could face reality, meeting it with a fortitude like Marcia's own. She too could accept life's postulates and axioms, waiting serenely through weariness and grief for life's certain compensations. She had grown unafraid. She looked back to see Marcia smiling at her through the dusk.

It was her acknowledgment of comradeship. For them, she knew, the subject of parting was ended and for all time. She did not speak again but sat quietly until the lids drooped heavily over Marcia's eyes and she began to breathe long and deeply. After a long time, seeing that she was asleep among those foolish, brave-colored pillows, Janey slipped away. There was no time to be lost.

Hugh's voice with husky, boyish undertone answered her knock. She crossed the dusky room and put her two hands in his; and kneeling beside him she told him, quietly, what Marcia had said.

"She's trying to save you, dear," she added after she had finished. "She wants you never to be hurt or sorry. I think she hoped that we could send you off—but I thought of all the years coming after this year, Hugh. And it seemed to me you ought to know—and take your choice—"

"My choice?"

"It'll be hard, Hugh. Three months—six months—a year, facing reality and yet being honor-bound never to show your fear or grieving. Keeping a valiant face for the small things—being always ready to take the moment of happiness when it comes and getting out of it—what Marcia takes. And *making her believe that you'll remember nothing else.*"

"I should have married her ten years ago—"

"It won't do, Hugh," she said sharply. "Regrets. That's it. You're honor-bound, if you have your own way. It will take superhuman love—"

"And do you think," Hugh asked whimsically, "that a human can't find that if he must have it? I want to be back there, Janey, when she awakens again."

There was no grieving then in his voice. She stopped him hesitatingly, her hand on his arm.

"First—there's something else, Hugh, now that we're speaking out. If you are there in an hour, you'll find her sleeping, I think. And I—need you. I'm going to do something very much no affair of mine. 'The—time passes so soon and the chance will be gone.' It's Mildred, Hugh. She's breaking her heart for Dru. I'm going to send for him."

"And you wanted me to stand by?"

"Will you?"

"You bet!" He glanced at his watch. "What's pride? We'll wire him, Janey—to-night. There's time. We can cut down the kitchen garden to the dam and tramp up the island to the station. It will save us time. We can have it off by ten—talkin' over what we'll say on the way. Dru could get here by Wednes-

day night—if he had a night letter by to-morrow morning. We'll come home by the Highway and I'll drop in at Marcia's—"

So Hugh had his way. He came in toward dawn to tap at Janey's door and tell her first. And at the breakfast table he told the others. Everything was ready. There were to be no guests—just the tribe all together on Marcia's vine-hidden porch. Wednesday night, say—or Thursday—

They were not greatly surprised. As Alicia said, the affair had gone on so long now. "She will be better now it's coming fall," they told him as they wished him happiness; and Hugh, smiling, knew that the hard, small things that must be faced valiantly had begun for him. "But why dawdle between two days? So long as they were all there? Why debate as to Wednesday or Thursday—? Any special reason?"

It was Janey who first saw the Special Reason swinging down the Highway toward the gate—a tall young person in fresh white clothes, smoking a careless cigarette of the sort that are as expensive and exclusive as millinery masterpieces.

"Where is she?" he asked directly as he pushed open the door.

Janey's hand went to her throat in that characteristic gesture by which she met such tones as were in his voice.

"Side yard—porch," she whispered. "Hugh insisted that she darn all his socks before the—wedding. He's reading—to her. There's about a—bushel. He b-borrowed some of Alan's—"

"Good girl." A flicker crossed Dru's eyes like the

wing of a bird obscuring the sunlight for the fraction of a second. There was a blue bruise of finger marks on Janey's shoulder for days after in the place his hand had rested. He strode straight across the dining-room. From outside Janey heard the scrape of chairs; and then Mildred's voice, cool as running water.

"Well—Drury—"

"Make it wel—come, darling. Say you're glad to see me, eh? 'The bridegroom's doors are opened wide, and I am next of kin—' Aren't you going to make it wel—come?" There was a long, long silence after that and at the end of it Dru's voice again, unsteadily, "Darling."

CHAPTER XVII

SEPTEMBER was ending. Day by day the maple branches slowly crimsoned; the ash trees glowed more golden; the red alder's scarlet berries flamed in wayside thickets and the prairie air grew mellow and pungent as if, somewhere, pine knots were burning in a great chimney-place.

At the Lodge the merry-making that had lapsed with the heat began again furiously. Mildred and Dru were in the thick of it, dashing back and forth daily between the old stone house and the mansion on Millionaire Row, whichever of the two happened to be their ostensible stopping-place. Madam Pennell suavely stilled open gossip by a stately dinner for her son and daughter to which most of Fairfield came and glowed in Fairfield's friendly fashion. After that it seemed as if every one were eager to put a spoon in the stirring. Mildred turned about and entertained for Janey, with Dru's mother as gracious Patroness in the background. Edith Vibart and Sylvia Glennard, suddenly aware of a new charm in the girl they had met with genial indifference for years, followed with luncheons, Franc took them into Town for the first matinée of the season; Vollmar blandly asked the Macallisters to dine with him at that white-pillared Inn where he had been wont to take Janey; there was a week-end autoing trip with Mildred and Dru; a week-end houseparty at Great-

Aunt Medora's—and Janey in a state the more enchanted because she had never believed she could possess it. Her warm autumnal coloring deepened and grew richly vivid; the gay expectancy of her face gave her sparkle; she drank a new happiness as she would have tasted a golden wine held to her lips.

For an hour, one late afternoon, a comradely silence had rested on the Macallister porch. There had been a lull in gayety and they were making the most of it. Now and then Frances hummed softly as she worked at Janey's monogram, set finely in the corner of a heavy, damask napkin, for Franc and Don had undertaken to fill with choice linen the quaint, carven chest that Hugh had found for the little stone house. Now and then Mildred hummed the refrain with her, as she puckered her brows absorbedly over the color-scheme of cream and gold and dull rose that would bring out the hint of bronze in Janey's dark hair and the depths in her blue eyes. In a sunny corner Alicia's skillful fingers were shaping the narrow golden frame for the painting which had won a medal in the Spring exhibit and was destined to hang above the fireplace in the cottage, against that Thanksgiving Day when Janey should become its mistress. But she put down her tools presently and looked over at Janey herself, with a frown of impatience.

"You've said that thing twice in fifteen minutes," she said briefly.

"And I heard you saying it to Alan last night," Mildred added. "I heard you very distinctly."

"Rash, Jane." Frances' gurgle of amusement conveyed the impression that one passed through these in-

credible stages and looked back on them with a certain weary self-ridicule.

Janey was hemming kitchen curtains. And as her fingers set the tiny, even stitches in the cheesecloth, her mind had been day-dreaming concerning a color-scheme that was quite her own. For she had noticed that the afternoon sunlight always lay across a wide shelf in the tiny kitchen of the cottage; and always, she decided, it should strike some homely note of color. She was planning just what it should be: red apples on snowy days; cool-looking lettuce and parsley in a glass bowl on hot summer afternoons; oranges piled high on a blue china platter during the blurred gray of March or November. It was a very fetching scheme and she jerked herself from its contemplation with regret.

"What did I say?"

"You said—" Mildred's infinitesimal pause pointed her words significantly. "Just half-aloud, you said, 'I am the happiest woman in the whole world.'"

"Well," Janey said composedly, "I suppose I am."

"I know, dear, but—"

"So why shouldn't I say it? Everything—as it is: wonderful days; wonderful pleasures; waking up every morning and knowing Alan's in the world."

"But, Janey—"

"Ever since I read my first fairy-tale," Janey rushed on, "I've thought that if fairy-tales came true, some day *I'd* be—chosen. Then, of course, I thought it would be a real prince riding up to the gate on a coal-black charger and leading a milk-white palfrey by a golden bridle—but I've grown away something from princes. Lately, I've not cared for their chins. I've

thought I'd be content just to have the finest and nicest man in the world happen by some day and—choose me. Out of all the millions of women, you understand, choose—Me. And it happened. Just like that. I am," Janey's pointed chin tilted a trifle, "the very happiest woman in the whole world."

"It's the saying it, over and over like that."

"And to Alan."

"To Alan? Why, Alan of all people."

Frances' proud little mouth tightened a little at the corners. She put down her sewing and turned toward Janey.

"I wonder, Janey, if you really—understand men. They are different. Women—women want a new assurance of love every hour in the day. 'Do you really love me?' is the insatiable question, and the right answer never grows stale. Women are—insatiable, rather. Men—aren't. They don't want any assurances. They want a love that is always masked. They want a love that is never quite captured, never quite revealed, always veiled behind some mood. The woman who has the greatest power over a man is the elusive woman, hiding unexpectedly behind indifference. It's an art worth any woman's time. A man will stay keen on the trail of a woman who always manages to escape the nets he spreads for her. You see, it's an appeal to his hunting instinct—"

"I'd hate that," Janey said serenely.

"It's a wise woman," Franc returned with pointed sententiousness, "who knows enough not to show her hand when she plays the game of love."

"Franc is right on one thing, Janey," Alicia went on

earnestly. "It's a psychological fact that down all the ages, men have been hunters, by instinct. It's their dominant trait, now, under all this veneer of civilization. Look at their games of business and their sports. They're as close to barbaric culture as they can get and save their faces. Naturally, then, the woman who comes nearest a man's heart is the woman who knows how to make pursuit least certain— Any wife will tell you—"

"But it sounds such rot," Janey protested.

"It's true. You have to admit the subtle current of antagonism under every relation between men and women. It's showing up now because women have learned self-expression lately and are understanding their own power. But it's been there always, even with such bond-women as the Mid-Victorians. Perhaps there's an unacknowledged envy, each for the other. Perhaps it is the inequality that follows love. But it's there, whatever it is. Men won't have truth and frankness from women. They don't want it. What they want is coquetry and evasion and elusiveness."

"I remember," Mildred broke in suddenly, "hearing Mrs. Whitby tell Mother Pennell that Judge Macallister was the best-managed husband in town and that whatever Dale Macallister's system was, she had it perfected to the last degree."

"Sometimes," Janey snapped vindictively, "I think I detest Mrs. Whitby—"

"Just the same," Mildred insisted, "there probably was something. There always is something—"

"Something too big for Mrs. Whitby to understand.

Mid-Victorian *she* is with her little old last-year's bird's nest of a mind—"

"Tut-tut. What's this?" Hugh rounded the corner of the porch with Alan at his elbow and Bobs at his heels. "Are you speaking of friends or anything, Janey?"

It was an inauspicious arrival. Given time, Janey would have recovered her own clear serenity and laughed away the solemnity of the sentences still ringing in her ears. But with those three women looking on, the age-old precepts that have been handed down from attractive mother to attractive daughters, concerning woman's power at woman's business, had caught intangibly at Janey's thought. She seemed metamorphosed into a creature of mysterious possibilities, shifting moods, shimmering laughter, hidden thoughts behind her elusive smiles. Even Alan, sitting there easily in the deep chair, seemed utterly strange. It was as if Alicia had docketed him neatly: one of the conquering sex who, in the merry war that waged forever, could be overreached only by the secret mysteries of woman-kind. Janey looked at him curiously as he drew his chair close and dropped his hand over hers.

"Have we interrupted a real row?" he asked after a moment of silence.

"No." Janey listened for cool impersonality in her tone. It was there. She felt the three pairs of eyes upon her and she disengaged her hand gently and brought it back to her sewing.

"You look something like it."

"Do we?" Her voice had a touch of mockery, now.

Alan's eyes rested on her slim fingers, ruffling through the creamy cheesecloth. A woman, sewing, is to any man the incarnation of mystery. He bent closer as if he wished to cut her off from the others and enclose her with a look.

"What have you been doing all day?" he demanded. "I've rushed through heaps of work, piled up after all this jaunting. What have *you* been doing. Tell me."

"Oh—the usual." She was very airy.

"I've some wonderful news—"

Janey broke across his eagerness with the slightest of yawns. Just because such words would have brought her instinctively to a throbbing interest, it appeared as good a chance as any to test the axioms of womankind: "A man wants a love that is always masked"—"a man stays keen on the trail of a woman who always manages to escape the nets he spreads." Here was a net, indeed. Behind her hand she gave him a smile so fleet and mechanical that a puzzled look came into Alan's narrow eyes.

"What is it, Janey?"

"What is—what?"

"Are you tired?"

"A little," she answered laconically. She made no sign of having heard his earlier eagerness. Hugh broke a chill, penetrating pause with a sudden remark about Luzon; and Janey welcomed its irrelevancy as relief from the strange turmoil that threatened to possess her. She felt a new excitement running like flame along her nerves, but she felt, too, a sure power in that inscrutable composure that revealed nothing and yet hinted much. She smiled secretly at the shadow of

wistfulness in Alan's face as he took up Hugh's remark about Luzon and plunged into a description of cool waterways and lush, overhanging forest. Presently his look came back eagerly to Janey.

"Let me tell *you*—" there was the lightest emphasis on the "you" that seemed to hedge her about. "Listen, dear—"

She stood up, yawning, again. That proprietary "dear" before Frances and Alicia.

"Luzon—seems such a long way off," she murmured. "I'm hardly up on geography, Alan. If you'll excuse me—"

Upstairs, the strange assumed lassitude settled down upon her in reality. She dropped down into the low chair beside the window, staring down at the long rows of fall anemones bordering the paths and the pale, hardy chrysanthemums throwing an amber glow on the gray wall. Beyond the river a purple shadow rested on the rolling hills; a bar of dusky violet outlined a cloud low on the horizon. The tranquil golden day cooled the racking tumult surging through her like a coming fever. She began to wonder why she had let an ugly mood creep in and dim her joyousness. Was it true that men wanted this unexpected apathy, this aloofness? Did it give a woman a secret power to simulate indifference? It caught at a man's attention, doubtless. But was the power worth the price of this secret tumult that gave her no happiness? She thought of the odd look of pain that sometimes grew in Don's eyes as they followed his lovely wife; she thought of Mildred's light mockery hiding pain. Knowing their defeats, she had listened—her mind caught again

at Marcia's serene sweetness and patience and to her own great surprise a tear trickled down her face.

"Of all fool things," she said vigorously; and as if to period her sentence, the screen door slammed below. She looked out cautiously, but it was only Bobs slouching across the garden. He stopped at her low whistle.

"Alan gone?" she asked. Bobs shook his head.

"'Licia jus' asked him would he stay to dinner. I'm to tell Martha."

"He better not stay. He better go home, if he knows what's good for him."

"Whassa matter 'th you, anyways?"

"I don't want him staying here. I'm not going to be here, to-night. You make him go home, will you?"

"Where you going?"

"That," Janey said distinctly, "is something I'm not telling to anybody." She drew back mysteriously, her finger at her lips, and blew a kiss toward Dale Macallister's portrait smiling at her from the hall. "You'd do it—and not feel foolish about it, either. Wouldn't you, Moth'? Such a goose to lose a good hour of Alan's company."

Down on the porch a dull silence had closed over her departure. The three women sewed quietly in that perfect comprehension of the situation which escaped both Hugh and Alan. They only knew that something had gone awry without any real finality of displeasure in Janey's going. And Alan, frankly worried, had only nodded in a preoccupied way when Alicia with a rather late impulse toward amends, asked him to dinner.

"I had word from Washington, to-day," he began after a pause.

"Big chance," Hugh cut in. "He's wanted to go to Luzon. Make some investigations, verify reports—so on. It would be like cuttin' off one's own head to miss it."

"This winter, Alan? You mean you're considering it seriously?"

"Naturally," Hugh answered for him. "One does consider one's life business that way."

"But right now—when would you have to start?" Frances put down her embroidery with real concern.

"I am leaving Chicago at ten to-morrow morning," Alan said monotonously, as if it were a lesson he had learned by rote. "There is to be a conference in Washington. Allowing a day and a half for that, I can be back here by Saturday afternoon; and to make the next steamer—the steamer that I must take, I gather from the wire I have—to make that steamer from San Francisco, I shall have to leave on the Western Limited Saturday night."

"But Janey?" Mildred's voice ran an octave of dismay. "What will Janey do? Almost ready—and her wedding postponed."

"Does it have to mean that?" Alan asked in his new, worried tone. "Does it, do you think? Hugh and I have been talking it over while we were looking up trains and boats. I came over to ask her if she wouldn't go with me."

"Alan! It sounds more preposterous than anything I ever heard. Imagine Janey—tramping Luzon."

"It is just impossible," Alicia said decisively after

an instant's grave silence. "I wouldn't ask it of her, really. There's barely four days. There is nothing done for a wedding; certainly no outfit for a crazy jaunt into a country that isn't civilized. Janey couldn't put it through. She's used to having things move in orderly, systematic fashion. And if she tried because you asked her to, and then failed to make it—"

"Janey's said over and over that she'd never do a thing like that. It's the most Macallister-y kind of a trick; getting plans all laid for something and then rushing ahead and doing something quite different. I do it occasionally. Dru will tell you that. But it's a dreadful strain. And father isn't any too well just now, after this heat. And there is Bobs to consider—"

"Of course all you and Hugh have to do when you start for Siberia," Franc said amusedly, "is to put a toothbrush in your pocket and start out the front door. But the whole machinery of living will have to be stopped and started again for Janey's going."

"She's important," Hugh conceded, "but it seems as if the lot of us, between us—"

"The point is Janey herself. Janey—among the disadvantages of Luzon. Janey's never been anywhere."

"What's the difference?" Hugh argued. "I'll bet she could make a home out of a hat-box if it came to it. I've said—ask her."

"It isn't fair to ask her. It isn't fair to Janey—expecting her to be married pot-luck fashion and start for the ends of the earth—"

"I wish she hadn't gone away," Alan said. "I sup-

pose she was tired, after this fortnight's whirl. I wish—"

"It would upset her dreadfully, to no good," Alicia continued, quite as if Alan had not spoken. "Her feeling of duty to Father and Bobs is enough in itself to make it impossible. So impossible that it seems to me simply selfishness to put the burden of decision on her shoulders. Frankly, that is my opinion. You'll agree when you think it over. The thing to do is to tell her quietly that the wedding must be postponed till you get back."

"At the shortest that would mean eight months. Perhaps a year."

"Even a year isn't an eternity."

"It's a darned long time."

It seemed to Alan that the Macallisters among them had contrived to erect a barrier as tangible as a stone wall between him and Janey. The thing looked feasible enough as he and Hugh had turned it over in the little stone house that afternoon. Four days was a definite period of time. The map of the world could change in four days. He had come across the garden, eager and impetuous, but something had happened. Janey had suddenly become inaccessible as she had never been; and now, the sound logic of her sisters made the dreams he had been building of star-lit nights, and the queer, tangy, scented tropical honeymoon became the mere vaporings of a love-mad boy. It *was* outlandish. There wasn't one woman in a thousand fit for a wild, year-long jaunt such as he was planning. It had been his fancy that Janey, gypsy-spirited, was the thousandth. But in the cold light of critical, sane judg-

ment, he saw the whole proposal as absurd. The best thing, as Alicia had said, was to announce his going and leave the wedding-date indefinite as his return. There would be letters, of course— Letters! He rose impatiently and strolled, with a fine assumption of indifference, through the hall toward the kitchen door from which he could see Martha basting a roast. There was no one else in the room. Out in the hall again, he came on Bobs, sitting unemployed and inscrutable on the newel-post.

"Seen Janey?" Alan asked casually.

"Yop."

"Somewhere about, is she?"

"She's gone already." Bobs' tone implied that Janey had departed for a remote continent—Luzon, perhaps. "Did you 'cide to stay with us f'r dinner, Alan? With Janey away like she is? They's hardly any cake and not so *very* much mashed potato; and Martha says she would not make no more not if the King of Spain was here waitin'."

"I—see," Alan returned politely. "I don't see how I can stay to-night, Bobs. I've such a lot to do. Will you make my excuses? I'll go through the side way. But listen—when Janey comes in, even if it is very late, you come and tell me. Will you?"

The sun was nearly down. A deep, purple cloud loomed against the fiery sunset, divided from it by a splintered, glorious edge of light and above that irregular flame the evening sky stretched calmly blue. As he swung over the wall a clear square of light grew in the window of the little stone house, as if to welcome

him through the coming dusk. Alan's breath caught when he flung open the door and stood upon the threshold; for inside, drawn to the window, was a tiny table, candle-lighted; and out of the shadows came Janey in a gown of filmy white, to lay her hand gently on his shoulder.

"You're late, dear. I've been waiting so long."

She said it with a sort of commonplace tenderness, as if always he had opened the door so, to come in and find her; as if, too, she gave him a tacit promise always to be waiting, however long it was. He was aware of a dull aching knowledge that this was not reality and that before it ever would be, dragging months would pass and wide seas roll between him and this girl who stood so close. Without his knowing it, the ache leant stiffness to his lips and a brusque note to his answer.

"I didn't expect this, Janey."

Janey drew back. Her hand fell from his shoulder. She, too, stiffened a trifle.

"Would you rather be alone?" she asked politely. "I thought it would be rather fun to pretend—I belonged here. Of course, it is an experiment, at best. One ought to try out the subtleties of marriage, Alan."

"Yes." It was Alan's cue to ask eager questions, to discover masterfully what lay behind the dangerous softness of her eyes. But—stupidly—he missed it. His eyes might have revealed it, for he was devouring Janey as if he could not see her quite clearly. But it was shadowy in the long room and Janey heard only the apathy in his voice.

"Not in the mood for experiments, I take it," she said lightly, picking up her scarf. "Will you be over, later?" That query in the face of a candle-lighted table, set for two.

"Janey, don't. Janey—" He turned her toward the table and pulled out her chair. The Jap appeared, grinning, in the doorway with plates of steaming soup. There was nothing for it but to go on.

They talked little—forced, heavy talk that fell of its own weight into the chasm widening between them. The delicious dinner turned savorless on Janey's plate; the candles sputtered uselessly; the very room, now that the sun was down, seemed chilly. It seemed inconceivable that together they shared this ironical stupidity, when with the Macallisters interrupting continually, they grasped at a tantalizing undercurrent of companionship. Did married folk sit opposite each other and find no words, no laughter? Was the first, fine rapture replaced not by comradely peace, but by dullness? Was the other way the better, after all? Would capricious aloofness, secret, cryptic moods pique his interest as frank affection did not? Desperately, Janey considered it, her eyes on the tight line of Alan's lips; and without warning a cruel sob tore its way into her throat. Alan looked up in swift amazement.

"Are you cold, Janey?"

"Not v-very, thanks."

"You are. You're shivering. I'll have a fire."

Janey laughed. At least she made a sound that might have been thought laughter by a person of vivid imagination. With it, she put on an impenetrable *pourpoint* of reserve.

"Don't bother, please. We seem such dull company to-night."

"You and I? Dull company? Not in this world, Janey."

"Undeniably dull," she persisted sweetly in a tone so complex that Alan drew up short.

"Say that again," he challenged. He slipped his arm about her and half lifted her into the deep fire-side chair. Then he stooped and scratched a match. Wood hissed and crackled; flames ruffled up the chimney draft. The warmth enclosed them with coziness. He dropped down on the chair arm and laid his cheek against her hair.

"Janey, dear—"

Janey wriggled gently away. She sat poised on the edge as if she contemplated instant withdrawal. Alan came instantly to the point.

"What is the matter, Janey?"

"Matter?"

"Something's wrong. I can't pretend to know what. You've never been like this before."

"Haven't I?"

He gazed at her helplessly. After a moment he drew up another chair and sat down quite on the other side of the hearth.

"I went over to the Lodge this afternoon for a particular reason—more than just the particular reason of seeing you," he said with an aggrieved reasonableness.

"I had something to talk over with you. And I could not begin. You—I took it you weren't in a listening mood; tired after all the late hours we've

had. Then when I came home and found you here— But things have gone wrong again. I don't know how to begin."

"You might," Janey suggested amiably, "begin at the beginning." She leaned back comfortably, meeting his troubled look with a bland smile. Franc had been right, after all. Indifference was a powerful weapon in the hands of a woman; inscrutability a defense. She was quite sure now of herself and her power over her lover.

"I might as well speak flatly," Alan said in a harsh, uncertain way. "There is no way of softening it, apparently. There are just some bare facts to put before you. I am going away, Janey. I had a wire from Washington to-day, asking me to take up some field work—work I've coveted—in Luzon. It's a wild trip at best. I'm leaving to-morrow morning for Washington. I shall have to sail from San Francisco the middle of next week. I can spend part of Saturday afternoon, here, with you."

"And—after that?"

"After that," he said with an elaborate nonchalance, "it will be eight months—at least eight months and probably longer. So it means—so you see it means that our marriage will have to be postponed—will have to be indefinitely postponed."

Janey looked down after an instant to see her knuckles slowly whiten on the chair arm. She felt rigid, but her thoughts ran with an amazing clearness. Here was a crisis, surely, perfected to the uses of indifference and cryptic silence. She could let him go, acquiescing in that queer unconcern of his and trust

to what pride she could summon to build a barrier that would hide her hurt. She could count on a sentient, stinging pride. She possessed as much of that as any Macallister. It had kept her truthful often when she would have preferred to lie; it had kept her kind, once or twice, when she would have liked to be cruel; it demanded reason and logic of her. Now—

“We must be sensible,” she said kindly.

“Yes, of course,” Alan agreed, but she discerned a dreary lack of warmth in the statement.

The remark gave her time, however. And she needed time, just then, to bring something like order out of the chaos that had been her world. The issue must be faced, and sensibly, as she had said. She lifted her chin a little and recalled that she had pride to aid her. But at that moment the issue changed entirely; perhaps because she caught the odd wistfulness on Alan’s face and miraculously—since there is no understanding between the sexes—comprehended something of what he felt. At all events, the issue changed. It was not the question of postponing their marriage. It became merely a survival of a Janey Macallister, sane and frank, with a strength like fine, jewel-cut steel or of a watchful woman, impenetrable, restlessly seeking down devious ways for an evanescent power over the man she loved. At least, she told herself, she could be honest. It might be the surest way to lose what she desired to hold. If Frances were right, it might mean a lifetime of regret. But it meant, now, understanding that was simple and open, knowledge instead of doubt. But first—

“Alan—”

"Yes."

"Do you *really* love me?" The insatiable question.

"Love you—" The words lost themselves in a sort of choke. He put out one of his hands. She could feel it trembling over hers; and that gave her the courage to slip down on the hearthrug and lay her cheek against his arm.

"Then—take me with you. When you go away next Saturday, take me. I'll be ready, Alan. It doesn't take—much. You see I love you so—"

His arm swept around her. Jubilant phrases tumbled out, as they might if a man suddenly comes into possession of that for which he has been longing a lifetime or two.

"Sweetheart—I wanted that. I wanted you. I wanted you out there under those still stars. Just you—but Alicia—"

"Alicia?"

"All of them. They thought it was the wisest way not even to ask you, not to put it up to you at all. They could see all the difficulties—and there are tremendous difficulties when you come to pile them up. Just at first, Hugh seemed to see a way through; but when he got with the women—I don't know how he felt. I came away myself. We'll go back now and face them. A fig for the Macallisters. You're mine," he bent and kissed her roughly and drew back, laughing, "as you've never been mine before. We're standing together. We'll snap our fingers at the lot of them."

"It won't be anything," Janey said comfortably. Underneath her dusky hair, her eyes looked like two dark, sky-reflecting pools. "You'll find they'll take it

casually. They've the very grace of casualness. And start planning for us with the next breath. Fate has cut them down to four days to put this small affair through. And they're in for a wonderful time."

"Now, you're yourself again. This afternoon—what was the matter with you this afternoon, Jane?"

"Oh—those girls. They got in some deadly work on me, my dear. If the poison works as swiftly in the blood of every woman— They said that men follow only—elusive women. They want a love that is veiled—they want a woman who knows how to appeal to the—hunting instinct, you understand. *That* woman comes nearest a man's heart; always managing to escape his nets. But if you showed how much you—cared; and went around shouting like a Methodist camp-meeting over being happy—it was like putting all your cards on the table in the stiffest sort of game. You'd be sure to lose in the end. So I—"

"Experimented in the subtleties of marriage?"

"I tried it out. I wanted to know. If the woman who comes nearest a man's heart—"

"The woman who comes nearest a man's heart—whatever women say to women—a man knows that the woman nearest his—heart, is the woman who has dropped her petty artifices just for him. It's never more than one woman in a lifetime, Janey; and it isn't always a man's wife. It takes daring to play a stiff game with your cards all on the table, you see. It takes a shameless honesty— That was the phrase your father used."

"Father?"

"He was telling me about your mother."

"Father—talking to you?"

"He seems to think I'm worth it—at least since Bobs made that discovery of his that threw us all into such confusion."

"Go on—"

"He said it was—intoxicating." He did not notice how still she sat beside him. "He said it wasn't her whimsical fancies; nor her beauty; nor the—the maddening docility she could assume at will. He said it wasn't even her fine, buoyant bravery. But the thing that made her always lovely to him was her shameless honesty. Her shameless honesty. And the thing—the best thing he had to remember of their years together was that there was decent truth between them."

Janey drew a long breath and laid her cheek against his arm. Her slim hands tightened about it.

"That was what Mrs. Whitby meant."

"What—"

"Moth's system," she said scornfully. "Of course she wouldn't understand—"

"Most women," Alan's eyes twinkled down at her, "couldn't. Most women are such abominable liars."

"I shall tell 'Licia that," Janey informed him gravely. "And I shall tell her you said it. As for me—" her chin tilted upward and her hands went home to his with a clasp that promised something more than any marriage contract man has ever devised. "Listen, Alan, I am the happiest woman in the whole world."

CHAPTER XVIII

JANEY, wakened by the slam of a door somewhere, lay for a time in a delicious aftermath of sleep. Her outer consciousness sensed only the young October day, full of wind-driven earth-fragrances, veiled in blue haze. But in the deeps of her drowsy brain, a sound persisted, a poignant, heart-catching little tune that seemed to be drifting in and out of the open windows. And presently, vague words hammered in her thought like remnants of a forgotten dream.

"And o'er them many a sliding star,
And many a merry wind was borne;
And, streamed through many a golden bar,
The twilight melted into morn."

Every fiber of her being flamed suddenly awake. For this was the Day. The Fourth Day, counting from that night when she and Alan had informed the Macallisters casually that they were sailing for the Philippines within a week. The Final Day in the Macallister reckoning, for they were scattering, after their summer-long reunion, and leaving only Franc and Don to keep the Lodge for Bobs. Even the Judge was planning a long-wished-for winter in Washington. And yet, for Janey, the First Day—

The last three had spun past her in a blinding whirl. From the moment that the Macallisters, catching their

breath, had plunged into a bewildering discussion of what a bride should carry for an eight months' honeymoon into Luzon, always supposing that she sat at the captain's right on shipboard and that there would be dances in Manila—there had not been a moment unemployed. They came to the breakfast table the next morning with formidable lists, which they consolidated and remade on the train going up to Town. For they went up to Town en masse, each with his allotted duty to make smooth Janey's path to the altar. A curious center of interest on the train to other Fairfieldians who watched them covertly from behind their papers. At the station they scattered, leaving Janey a final ten minutes with Alan before his train pulled away.

"I dread this," he told her soberly. "These next four days are going to be longer than all the eternity of time I'm going back to spend with you."

For answer she drew her finger-tips across his tired eyes.

"You haven't slept. You've been working all night."

"I don't think I'd have slept much anyway," he said, glinting at her from the corner of his eyes. "Not—last night, Janey. This is my very first wedding, y'understand, and I'm not hardened to it yet. When I think what it will mean to start off with you and a kit-bag—"

"And a few other things," Janey added. "Two tickets, for instance, to—Paradise. And a license."

"By Jove—a license! I'd forgotten. It seems strange I should have to have a license to marry you, Jane Macallister, when the thing's been ordained since the beginning of time. We'll get it Saturday."

"I think I'll get it before that," Janey said calmly. "Just to make sure. And seeing it's yours, I'll go fifty-fifty on the price of the thing with you, Alan."

"Ought you?" he asked earnestly. "Are they doing that now? I've thought a bride didn't appear until just at the first strains of the march, and then all blushes and confusion—"

"Trouble with you," Janey made dispassionate explanation, "is that you've been concentrating on the ideal Mid-Victorian bride. There's a difference with Moderns. 'Licia would explain it to you gladly. The Modern approaches the altar with—courage, I think it is, and initiative. Qualities like that—quite different."

"I shall get the ring," he announced firmly. "You can tell your ubiquitous family that before they come to hand with a Macallister substitute. I shall carry it in my pocket after the first half-hour I'm in Washington, and bring it with me. 'By, dear o' mine."

Ten minutes after Janey had plunged into a mad orgy of shopping under the guiding hands of Mildred and Alicia. They had thought of everything, it seemed, beginning with the wedding-gown, filmy as spindrift and faintly creamy like the wedding-veil of Venetian point that had been Dale Macallister's and that Janey was to wear again. There was, supplementing the famous Pink Gown, a gold-colored dinner frock, of crêpe so fine that it could be packed away in the smallest compartment of the pig-skin trunk, light and tough as Alan's own, which Hugh had bought for her that morning. There was the tan biege traveling suit with its smart toque to match and filmy blouses that, like the dinner gown, could pack away into the least com-

pass. There were riding suits of different weights of khaki with high boots, a soft, shapeless hat that pulled down tight over Janey's brown hair and a half-dozen, mannish-looking silk shirts. There were the sets of silken underwear that could be kept fresh and dainty most easily without the aid of civilized implements; the handkerchiefs, monogrammed with her new initials under Mildred's supervision, and done in an amazingly short time, the scattered trifles needed for that year in the wilds, from the boxes of soap down to the boxes of finest hairpins, and the filling of the traveling bag, pig-skin, like the trunk, which Hugh had brought her with Marcia's love. It was a task performed with Macallister efficiency perfected to meet this spur of necessity. And if those days Janey had hungered for the closer touch to glow upon her own deep happiness, she put the thought away as disloyal. She knew that the Macallisters, in their own fashion, were being very kind.

The Third Day they were at home with the spicy smell of cooking seeping through the hall and out upon the porch, where Frances hummed below her breath as she tucked orange blossoms into the misty folds of Janey's wedding-veil; and with Fairfield, uninvited to the wedding, passing in a steady march through the garden for a last word with Janey.

"And rapt through many a rosy change,
The twilight died into the dark—"

She had found the old poem accidentally the night before, when she was putting the living-room to rights after the last caller had left and the Macallisters had gone upstairs. A book, lying face-down in the corner

of the davenport had drawn her, with Dale Macallister's name running across the fly-leaf. She was of the generation that loved romance. Mid-Victorian, Janey remembered. As she turned the pages, words, heavily underlined, sprang to meet her.

"And on her lover's arm she leant
And round her waist, she felt it fold
And far across the hills they went—"

She had gone upstairs to stop in the square hall and look long at that portrait of a girl stepping down the stairway on her bridal morning. And there rose, like a tide against the kindliness of the Macallisters the old yearning for that beloved Presence; the longing, almost greater than she could bear, to come again within the circle of those tender arms. Frances had come part way and Alan had given her at second hand, assurance that her Father had not forgotten; but they were not Macallisters. It was from the Macallisters that Janey wanted a sign that they, too, held the memory of happy things. She had gone to bed with that desire mingling with the words her mother had underscored. And she had wakened, now that the Day had come on which she was to go adventuring with Alan beyond the utmost purple rim of all the hills, with the thrill of adventure singing itself into the cadences of a foolish little tune.

"O eyes long laid in happy sleep,
O happy sleep that lately fled—"

She sprang up and began to dress swiftly. Down in the garden, Bobs, pajama-clad, burrowed into cor-

ners; and as she stopped to look down, she heard Alicia speaking just below.

"But why, Bobs? That's all I'm asking."

"Because it isn't seven yet. I don't never dress till it's seven."

"Not the pajamas. That other thing."

"'S Janey's bouquet. I got some weenty pink roses 'th that quarter Father give me for not goin' t' help Janey shop in Town. An' Marcia had some awful pretty paper lace, an' here are th' sweet-peas—Janey'll be awful pleased."

"It hasn't occurred to you, I suppose, that our effete marriage customs permit the bridegroom to furnish the bouquet, rather than the bride's small brother. Unfortunate, Bobs."

"Janey won't care. Janey would rather have me. How'd Alan know what was a bouquet?"

Janey's heart contracted with a little wrench. How explain? Alan's white roses would be quite different from the lace-ringed, pink-and-white bouquet of the Portrait, from which Bobs drew his idea. For a moment she considered the alternative that Bobs' calm security seemed to demand. But, after all, Alan's flowers were—Alan's. She would make much of the others for Bobs' sake. He could be appeased—diverted. She could make him understand.

A motor-horn honked at the gate and Mildred and Dru, with Hugh on the running board of Dru's racer, swept up the drive. Mildred's gay voice called her down.

"Janey—Special Delivery. We met the boy down the Highway a piece. Aren't you r-ready yet?"

"Coming." Janey steadied her voice. Something from Alan, it must be. No one else could be expected to send special-delivery boxes for a flash-in-the-pan sort of wedding like this. There was a folded note slipped in between the rubber band and the box and she read that first.

"Mid-Victorian or Modern:—" the letter ran,

"Whichever you may be, remember this one thing. I'm glad Life's given me—just you. Glad. Every time I look at you to-night, you'll know I'm thinking that. And if I don't look at you—much, it will be because I can't and keep my head."

Underneath was an exquisite bracelet of pearls and platinum, sent from Washington to reach her at the beginning of her Day. The Macallisters exclaimed over that, holding up Janey's rounded arm to slip it on with their gayest wishes. Excited crimson flamed in her cheeks. Her wide glance swept around the table: at Alicia, nibbling the news as she did her toast, and adding her own odd, running appraisal of the day's events, just as happened every morning of the summer; at Don, with his paper folded and squared in his special holder, deep in the editorials; at Hugh, who had formed the habit of dropping in to share this early meal while Marcia slept, arguing tires with Dru; at Mildred, gay and vivid, beside her father. A little of her gladness ebbed away. It was all so commonplace. It was merely the Fourth Day to them, with multitudes of things still to be done; hardly even the Final Day, having its Last Times remembered as they crowded

each other's heels through the hurrying hours. For her alone—until Alan came—it was the First Day—

A bell pealed through the house. Bobs, tumbling downstairs, clothed in ordinary, called out to them excitedly:

"You folks better come here. Here's Asa Jennison an' a hand-cart with a lotta things."

They surged out on the side porch and watched while Asa shoved boxes, one after another, toward Janey's feet. He counted them as he lifted the last from his cart.

"Them all on the seven-one. I brung direct fr'm th' train. Likely they'll be another load on the nine. But 'f ye don't mind I'll leave 'em wait 'n' see what's on th' 'leven-six, savin' a trip onct and bringin' 'em in a bunch. 'Course if you—this here's your Day, y' unnerstan', Janey, an' wishin' you a lot of 'em—many of 'em—Well—"

"Presents that would make a Mid-Victorian," Janey said happily, "swoon with delight." And she held up to them a sheaf of linens from Great-Aunt Medora, so heavy that they weighted down her slender arm. There were presents, too, that no Modern would have refused: A set of limpid glass, a dozen solid spoons, a blue-shaded Whistler. Vollmar sent a row of leather-backed, deckle-edged books. And Alicia, poking an experimental finger into a long, narrow package, broke the heavy seals and tore away the coverings from a worn-edged kid box.

"From the Safety Vaults in Town." She sat back with a short gasp.

"My word, Janey Macallister. Did father give you—that?"

Janey's finger pressed the spring. Flaring up from gray velvet was a chain of sapphires, set in quaint square links of darkened silver.

"The necklace," she whispered softly. "The wedding necklace that—"

"You've a sapphire ring," Judge Macallister explained in a tone that somehow stilled the words on Janey's tremulous lips. "You might as well have this. There will be enough for the other girls."

"We've no time to waste *now*," Alicia said with the firm certainty that carried them all before her. "Dred and I are going at the decorating. Dads wants the silver candelabra used— Great-grandfather's candelabra. I thought shaded lights. It's for you to say, Janey. And flowers— There's the telephone. Janey—run."

The Day closed in upon them. Even a flash-in-the-pan sort of wedding takes time, and when one has held the reins of a household in one's hands for years, one's own wedding-morning brings no diminution of responsibility. Janey skimmed from the front door to the telephone, from telephone to kitchen, from kitchen back again to the front door.

"Miss Janey," it was Amy Powell, flying through the garden, her eyes big under her curls, "can I borrow Bobs for my Auntie Marcia? They's some pinky yellow dahlias gone to blooming over night, just for your wedding. Can I borrow Bobs?"

"Janey. If you want garden flowers, you better call

up Billy Pattison. He telephoned to say that the Latin Class was standing by to run all errands. And they'll ask nothing better than to comb the gardens. They're wild to do something—call them yourself, will you, dear?"

"Janey. Martha's wanting you to stir the wedding-cake for luck—"

"And come upstairs, will you, Janey? I want to see if everything is just right about the wedding-gown—"

"Janey. Did you say the silver candelabra? Dru says he'll clean—"

"Janey, honey, there's the telephone."

"Getting married is certainly exciting business," Janey laughed as she slipped through the hall. "That's Mr. Moore, probably, to tell me he has those extra chickens Martha wanted."

But it wasn't.

"Wessonunion," an indistinct voice mumbled in her ear. "Tel'gramf'r mizjane macal'ster."

"Yes." Her fingers clutching the receiver trembled a little. "This is Jane Macallister."

"Sign' Alancamel," the chant went on. "Says—tough luck, I say—Says 'Freight wreck ahead. Mot'-rin Indyanap'lis.' He oughta catch the five-two outa Town. Nothin' t' worry about yet awhile. Says—somethin' ain't very plain. 'Modern takes initiative.' Get that?"

"Yes," Janey said faintly. "I understand." The line dropped into whirring silence. After what seemed a long time, Hugh touched her arm.

"It's nothing." Her voice sounded surprisingly steady. "Alan worrying over the license. He's been

delayed a bit. He won't be here till nearly tea-time."

The Day went on. Hugh brought Marcia over for luncheon, which turned out to be the most hilarious of meals. Janey wondered where Martha had found the time to serve them with what seemed to be the special favorite of each one, so far as dishes went, and wondered again when those dishes went back to the kitchen so well-filled. The talk and laughter did not falter for an instant. It seemed that they had no sooner stopped to sit at the table than they were swept on to other things. Alicia and Mildred put up great sheaves of flowers in the wide spaces of the living-room and the Judge, a silver candelabra in each hand, followed them about as closely as if he doubted their ability to make Janey's marrying place beautiful. In the dining-room Frances set the long table for their wedding-supper, Amy Powell continually at her elbow. The high-school algebra teacher, who had a Ph.D. and exquisite hands, played scullery maid to Martha in the kitchen. Everywhere there drifted little snatches of the tune that Janey had heard early that morning. It drifted through the house, hummingly, room after room. Janey, wondering, stopped in the dining-room door.

"Whatever is it that you're singing, Franc?"

"That?" Frances questioned innocently. "What was it? Just something I heard."

She hummed it again as she turned to sort the silver. Mildred, twining smilax about the curved stair-rail, was whistling softly when Janey passed her. She knew that she would never hear a fragment of that song again without sensing the brilliant, pungent October day and the ferment of happy haste that beat about her.

Hugh called to her in the mid-afternoon casually. He had just been sitting at the telephone.

"Wire from Alan, Janey."

"Yes?"

"He missed that first train out of Indianapolis. He caught another over a different road and wired en route. He'll be about an hour later. Make the sixteen out of Town and get here by seven. Dru's to meet the train."

"Time enough," Janey sang down to him, "for marrying, if we can leave here by nine—"

The tumult quickened. By four, the trunks had gone to the station and Janey's bag stood ready-packed on the empty desk in her empty room; by five the Lodge was vibrant with the hurry of the finishing touches—the final wreaths; the last bowl of mayonnaise; the last laying out of gowns across the beds upstairs; the Macallister insistence that Bobs, who had been polishing the family shoes as an antidote for idleness, should take a second bath. At six, Janey went across to bring Marcia back with her for the light tea that Martha was serving in deference to the later wedding-supper. They came in to a house miraculously stilled. The afternoon sun, glinting through the western window, lay across a table, gleaming with silver and polished glass. The hall was ready for the bride's descent, every leaf in its appointed place. The living-room waited, wide and dim and fragrant, its corners a mystery of living green—a familiar room transformed into a hushed and holy place through whose midst a white path ran to the altar set between the windows.

The Macallisters lingered about the garden seat

where Martha was to serve them the moment Alan came, and sang, lustily, the loudest songs they knew. They had just finished the tender ditty of the Owl and the Pussy-cat and Janey, crimson-cheeked and breathless from laughter, had run down to the gate to reassure a sober neighbor who was stopping anxiously to make out the incomprehensible noise, when Dru's gray car swung about the larches and into the drive. He had come from the twilight train that should have brought Alan back to her; and Alan was not there.

"We'll postpone tea a bit," Alicia decided for them all. "You go and dress, Janey. We all will. Then, if Alan comes on the next train—"

Janey mounted the stairs, carefully avoiding the railing with its circling smilax. An odd weariness had settled down upon her. She felt dull and burdened, a tiny fear lapping insidiously at her staunch expectancy. She knew that Alan had no choice. Even if he went alone, he must not fail to make the boat at San Francisco. She slipped into her own room and shut the door behind her, leaning against it until she could get her breath to coming steadily again. She stopped many times, as she slipped into the filmy white gown and drew down the pointed cap of lace about her hair, to listen tensely for some new sound—the whir of a motor or Alan's step on the gravel walk. The Macallisters had gone downstairs; and presently there drifted through the quiet house the soft, lilting little tune that had woven itself through all her Day. Some one was playing it as if to crowd each note with a tenderness that was beyond all words. She had wakened to it as to new adventure; to romance and carefree gypsying

through far-off lands and across the strange seas. She had heard it marking the passage of the hours of that Final Day, intensifying the merry excitement that beat through the wide rooms. But now the music fell into a strange rhythm of loneliness and pain. Wandering meant long distances and weary journeyings. There would be changes in the months to come. And they were hers—these Macallisters—hers in tears and laughter.

At eight, they called to her. They were all down, Mildred said, and Martha was waiting impatiently behind the crack of the kitchen door. From the curve of the stair she could see them clustered just inside the wide, glass door leading from hall to living-room. They were a goodly company, she thought, and stopped to smile at them. Some one said, "Look," in a hushed way, and Bobs and the Judge, turning suddenly from the window, cried out. Bobs said, "Moth'," but the man's call was one of unendurable longing, "Dale—Dale, darling."

The next moment a silence fell. There was the sound of abashed laughter and they moved back, their averted glances eluding Janey's, embarrassed by that flickering emotion. After all, the twilight shadows had confused them, and through them a joyous girl, stepping down a curved stair, her bridal laces floating behind her, her eyes as darkly blue as the sapphires, set in their darkened silver, that clung about her rounded throat. Mildred sat down behind the tea-tray and took up a thin, pink-petaled cup nonchalantly. Only Bobs, never able to adjust himself swiftly, tested

the icing of his cake with an experimental fingernail and broke into speech.

"Never had any pinky cakes since my six' birthday party that Moth' made. Nobody ever made 'em any more till now. Martha says these here's bride's cakes, but they's jus' exac'ly like the ones Moth' always made. I c'n remember every birthday I ever had back till I was four and I c'n remember those pinky cakes distinctly. Moth' beat the icing hard an' let me watch her—"

"Me, too, son," Hugh broke in. "I had 'em my sixth birthday, too, just the same way. We all did. Moth' was the first Celebrator—"

"I can see her just as clear, this minute." That was Mildred. "I used to think there couldn't be any one as beautiful as she was coming downstairs all dressed for that old dancing club—the Fortnightly Cotillion, wasn't it, Dads?"

"The thing I remember is Jenny-June and that old pony phaeton overflowing on all sides with legs. Picnicking down in the Little Woods; and then, the books she read to us. Do you remember how Hugh tried to play Horatius off the quarry bank and broke his arm? Exciting business—Moth's reading—"

"Mother would have loved this Day," Alicia said softly. "Wouldn't she have been the gayest thing, having us all home together for a marrying? She celebrated every event—White Days, she called them."

"Did you remember that?" Judge Macallister drew a long breath. He spoke slowly and yet with a deep satisfaction, as if a heavy burden had slipped from his

shoulders. "She always would speak of life as a tapestry; 'strands that we weave in the warp of circumstance,' was her expression. She was full of fancies, homely, woman things. All the days had their color for her and the years their pattern. Quiet, gray days we had; and some exciting ones, like crimson; and 'high, blue' days she called them when things went well. And there were black days—few enough, thank God. I remember Hugh had scarlet fever once. Pretty sick, he was. Black days—and clear white days, and days that stand out even now after all these years like—like gold. She always had the sense of life as something real—spread out there before one as if we had stretched it on a loom. I remember her saying once that however rich the fabric was that we were weaving, there was only one thread that made its texture shimmering. And however dark the pattern grew, that thread of love could make it—warm and glowing. I—if she were here, she would have told you herself."

"It sounds like Moth'. Color and singing. Remember about the fairies that came to her christening and gave her gifts—laughter and a singing heart? She even told us the names of the fairies—I believed that solemnly for years. I'm not sure that I don't believe it now."

The Macallisters laughed with Alicia contentedly. They leaned a little closer, putting aside their hardly tasted plates. This was more than food and drink—this Presence, there among them. Underneath all that soft laughter, there was a hint, almost of tears.

"Janey—we wanted to wait till Alan came—"

"Tell her now."

"Janey—you remember the jigs Moth' made for us to dance by and the ditties for our nursery rhymes, and the songs for the old poems—"

"But did you ever know that she had written us our Bridal Song? Father found it in the safety vault when he went for the sapphires. All these years—She wrote it for us—"

"Don and Franc took it to Eric Vollmar and he arranged the music," Alicia said in the midst of that breathless hurry. "And Hugh's to play it for Franc. It would have been what Moth' would have wanted—"

"Every one's been humming it. Hugh's played it over and over. I expect," Franc added with a whimsical smile, "that most anywhere on the globe Hugh could sit down and play a bridal song for some one. I know of once or twice when he's done it. But this—we've been afraid to trust him. He'll play it so that you're fairly quivering with the sweetness of it; and some one will say, 'Is that *just* right, Hugh? Couldn't you make it just a little—'"

They laughed again.

"I wish Alan were here," Hugh said. "It's for both of you. Things we've given you—pigskin bags and linens and such will wear out sometime. But this—we wanted you to have something from us all that you can carry with you everywhere—always. Fifty years from now, you or your—children could be singing this—Shanghai—Buenos Aires. It is just the same. Try it, now, Frances, for Janey."

So Frances sang; and the melody became a song of happy memories and mother-tenderness and joyous childhood in a fragrant garden; a song of promise for

unbroken bonds that held closer and more firmly through the years.

“—Across the hills and far away,
Beyond their utmost purple rim,
Beyond the night, across the day,
Through all the world—”

Hugh's hands crashed on a discord. The shrill clamor of the telephone rang through the house. Don and Dru both started for the booth in the hall, but somehow it was Janey, her bridal laces caught across her arm, who took down the receiver and heard Alan speaking wearily across the miles between them.

“Janey—I've missed the train. The last train. I can't come now. The Flyer's leaving in less than an hour, from here. I tried—”

“I know.”

“No reproaches, dear o' mine?”

“I know you tried. I know that.”

“Yes. But I can't make it. Not to get out to Fairfield and back—even by motor. I can't make it.”

“No.”

“Janey—listen. Are you very Modern? There's a train left here just now that will go through North Fairfield in forty minutes. It gets to Omaha—God willing—about seven minutes before the Flyer.”

“Alan—”

“It's the only way. There's no choice for me.”

“I—know.”

Bobs touched her arm, but she shook him off. She was trying desperately to think, to put away the sight

of those set faces beside her in the hall. She wanted them—her own people. To leave them—

“Janey—I’ve just a moment more. Will you—be in Omaha?”

Again that insistent hand was at her elbow and Bobs’ soft exclamation sounded in her ears. She spoke impatiently:

“Bobs—don’t. Don’t bother.”

“I gotta bother, Janey. Janey, listen. I gotta scheme. They’s the Highway, Janey, and that trestle where the train goes over—the place we planted valley-lilies to that picnic Alan took us. We—we c’d all go *there*, Janey. Down the Highway; and Hugh got a train to stop once—”

“Alan,” she sang joyously, “I’m coming. Don’t you fret. I’ll be coming.” She faced about on her bewildered family. Under the misty veil her resolute little head tilted with new determination.

“Dru—Mr. Frisbie is at home to-night and he’ll give an order to have the Flyer stopped ten minutes at the crossing below Burford. Ask him, will you? Just ten minutes. Explain things—ten minutes is long enough for a wedding, isn’t it, Dads? It’ll be perfectly legal in ten? Bobs, you skip up to my room and get me that bridal bouquet you made. Alan’ll never remember a necessity like that. And put my traveling suit into a case, will you, Dred? I won’t stop to change because we’ll have to break the speed-laws now to make it. We’ll cut out the wedding-supper and the—the Bridal Song. Those things don’t matter—much, if you’ll—if you’ll all go with me down the Highway to

my—marrying. Well—Martha. If you're going to sniffing that way—listen, you go ahead and pack our supper in a hamper if you want to—everything—chicken soup in a thermos bottle, extra, because Alan will be tired to death—and we'll eat it every scrap on the train."

It was at that that Alicia began to laugh; queer, choking laughter that brought the Macallisters to surprised attention.

"It's so—Macallisterish," she gasped when she could get the breath. "That woman—said she'd never play the usual—trick; pushing things through. Said she—never would. And now—after all our plans and all our—work—that l-last weird touch. C-caroming down the Highway with a b-bride in a white satin wedding-gown and a hamper full of c-chicken salad—all on account of M-Martha. If it isn't going to be a Janey-esque wedding—"

And it was. The next moment a turmoil of gay haste engulfed them. Some one ran for Janey's bags. Some one—Marcia, probably, laughed in her ear. A coat was slipped over her shimmering whiteness. Some one caught up the silver candelabra from the little altar between the windows— Outside in the flare of the lights Hugh loomed up grotesque and black, bending over the engine of the big car. A call from the gate told them that Dru's racer was already off; the Judge himself lent a hand to Martha's hamper; and they were away, flying down the Highway lying white to the moon, beside the startling silver of the river.

They talked very little. There seemed, after the Song, no need of talk. An hour went by—an hour



"Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here together in the sight of God and this company—"

and a half—nearly two hours of swift, tense flight. And then—at the last turn of the road they heard Dru's shout and broke into shaky laughter. For with the great wheels grinding to a stop above them the Flyer was slowing on the trestle—car after car slipping past them in the darkness; and on the platform, staring gloomily out across the prairie, lost in long, somber shadows and faint silvery lights, sat Alan Campbell.

"Bridegroom," shouted Hugh and Don.

"Bridegroom," Janey called, as some one struck a match and the silver candelabra threw a pool of flame about her, "come down here and marry me. I've come a long way—and my family—"

She felt his arm on hers and his lips against the slim palms of her hands. Out of the star-shot darkness a man's voice began to speak.

"Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here together in the sight of God and this company—"

With the quaint old words, Janey's clear thought blurred. Far away she could hear Alan's low voice making old, eternal promises and sense the touch of his fingers over hers. Far away, there seemed to ripple up to her the haunting, poignant melody of her Bridal Song, dear and familiar, as if all her life she had known its lilting tune. And when—at the very end, after she had unclasped Bobs' clinging arms from about her neck and stood with Alan on the platform—it welled out and took on form and meaning, she realized suddenly that the Macallisters were singing.

And on her lover's arm she leant,
And round her waist, she felt it fold.
And forth into the world she went—"

Her heart pounded as Alan drew her close. Their voices rang on joyously.

"To that new world that is the old—"

"Always new," prayed Janey in her heart. "New every morning, new with every bit of laughter and snatch of song; and old as love—"

"Across the hills and far away."

The platform beneath them trembled and shook, but Janey did not know. She was listening to the words flung up to her from the road below.

"Beyond their utmost purple rim—"

"Wherever we go—across the hills and the valleys; across the burning sands and the trackless plains and the wide seas—"

"Beyond the night—"

Their voices sounded far-off, softened.

"—across the day—"

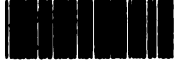
"A whole lifetime of happy days, please God—"

"Through all the world—"

"Through all the world, with laughter and a singing heart—"

"—she followed him—"

"Amen," said Janey Campbell softly.



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